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My Lady Vaudeville

and her White Rats

By

George Fuller Golden

Founder and first Big Chief of the White Rats of America

2,697

Published under the auspices of

The Board of Directors

of the

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To my dear friend

Mr. George M. Cohan,

this book is most respectfully dedicated.

The Author.

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MY LADY
VAUDE-
VILLE
AND HER
WHITE
RATS

My Lady Vaudeville.

I.

THAT was an inspiring superstition of the ancient Greeks, the supposition of a deity or muse presiding over each branch of art. Under its influence they produced the most beautiful works the world has ever seen. And though thousands of years have passed since then our artists still listen to the echoes of those Hellenic wonder workers. The nerves of the world were less racked in those days, and the perfection of each conception was a work of joy, inspired by hopes of divine approbation.

Those godful skies of Greece have vanished, we have lighted our tallow dips on her stars. And while her muses have slept through the centuries we have spent our breath and energy on speed and noise.

It is time for some satisfying diversion. And lo! into this clanking age of iron and gold a new little spangled fairy emerges, and methinks I can hear the notes of "Euterpe," "Melpomene," "Thalia," et al, in her still undeveloped voice. She

is my Lady Vaudeville. She has grown up in this new world and knows its hetrogeneity. She has only lately been anointed by those dreaming deities of old, so you may call her an accretion, an evolution or what you will, because she did not burst forth in full armour from the brow of Zeus, but evolved and grew beautiful through the ages. Now she is growing wise, and soon they are to crown her with the laurel.

We are all players, let us play we are Greeks. My Lady Vaudeville is the spirit of the modern stage. And in proportion as light has come to her, she has educated her followers to a better understanding. Gifted with perennial youth, she moulds herself into proportions ever more beautiful At first she inspired only songs and dances, capers, stunts and antics, and then gradually through the years her votaries became more and more versatile, more proficient, then aspiring, and now, like Undine of old, she has found her soul, and she aspires to interpret life and dreams. Opinion differs as to her origin and name. Some say her title came from a valley in Normandy, "The Val de Vire," while others contend that she was christened on the banks of the Seine, many centuries ago, when Napoleon, Notre Dame, and what we now call French history were all still in the distant days to come. Her Sire is supposed to have been a Fuller, who (like most men) took his name from his occupation, that of

fulling cloth. His workers, each evening after toil, gave entertainments on the banks of the river, and became known as the entertainers of the "Virevaude or Vaudevire" or "Vire Vire." However, this is all conjectural and concerns her name only, her spirit has existed since men and women first began to amuse each other with their talents. She has had many names, but "what's in a name?" She was born to please, and her minstrels have found their way into all lands with the gospel of laughter and song. And while her tribe has increased incalculably her spirit has evolved infinitely. From her school the world's best stage artists have graduated. Under her presidence the pulse of the world is learned. Her career has been a varied one. She came to this country in disguise and served us nondescript diversion in smoky halls under the name of variety. (In her heart she is a masker.) Her puppets then were clowns and buffoons, with the eternal exception of the few, the mislabeled few, who are always everywhere among the many, who know things that they can not explain; they know, and are therefore unknown. These few may have read the mystery of her starry eyes and believed in her destiny, but their names are "writ in water." Her audiences in those days were mostly of the same calibre as her entertainers, but as she improved her fare, new pilgrims came with softer voices and more gentle acclaim. But while still ambling before the

Philistines she was learning our ways, and studying how to wile us into an appreciation of better forms. Those were the days when some people used to say, "Your gallery god is your best judge of a show." Now everybody knows that a "Gallery god's twin deities are the slapstick and the bladder. However, when my Lady had served her purpose under the name of "Variety" she reassumed her old French cognomen "Vaudeville" and a palace was built for her in Boston, Mass., costing more than a million of dollars, then she tactfully prefixed the word "polite" to her name to lure the fastidious, who accept everything as per label when once it has passed the approval of the censor respectability. And as this class lives within such narrow bounds of convention as to be the least amused of all the earth's pilgrims, if not the most bored, they are consequently the most easily pleased. Therefore My Lady's advent was a blessing and their conversion easy. And as clean entertainment is most palatable it is also most profitable. So My Lady's smiles began to turn things into gold. And rival suitors came a wooing, and built other palaces in her name and she sailed along on the placid waters of prosperity for years as "Polite Vaudeville." And now competition for her became keen, and as competition is the life of her, she became beautiful, bright and clean. Her suitors built more palaces and became rich while serving her. Her jesters

abandoned the slap stick for the cap and bells. Everybody began to recognize her, and while some people came to see their favorites from the Thespian Temples play under her banner, they remained to be amused by her merry Andrews posturemasters, comic singers, dancers and reciters. Soon many of the elect of these were serving in the so-called legitimate theaters and becoming world famous, while the influx from these theaters to my Lady's halls drew a still larger clientèle of "desirables" to her palaces and the fare she served overcame their prejudices. Meanwhile the plot weavers sat up and took notice, and the best of them have now forsaken Morpheus o' nights to dream opened eyed, of laughter and tear compelling episodes to be played at my Lady's festivals. And so she has come out of the depths. She has evolved, she has come into her own. She has taken the drama under her wing and now flings you forth tabloid forms of the histrionic art between the lighter essays of her jesters. She has opened up an undreamed of era of theatrical enterprise, and if she continues to advance we may see in the near future all the best forms of the drama under her name. She is not in competition with the drama, she contains it, in all its forms. Tragedy, comedy, tragicomedy, farce, opera, operetta, minstrels and specialty. And when in the future you enjoy an excerpt from the best of each of the above in one night, under one roof, you may be

sure my Lady is presiding. The times demand that she reign. The age is rampant for speed. You want that and I want this, and someone else wants a taste of all in one night, well now it has come about that my Lady can serve all profitably, and though she still retains her light and airy ways of song and dance and laughter, she is shriven of her stigma. No loss of dignity now to play the greatest drama ever written under her name. And once more, "What's in a name?" What boots it what we call her so long as she has grown great of enterprise? What matter whether we say Vaudeville, Val de Vire or variety, so long as her artists be competent, some to interpret our emotions and others to divert and entertain us? As we grow ripe for better and higher forms of entertainment my Lady serves them, and will serve them as we grow. Her path has ever been upward, and against great odds; she has drunk of the dregs, and yet her spirit was always pure. The desire to please, to give joy and mayhap make us forget, this is the spirit that animated her and it is the spirit of life. Life itself is a lethe, otherwise it would be impossible, hence she is part of the universal harmony that turns worthless things to joy for the purpose of beguiling us to live out this pilgrimage. And against the prejudice of caste and class and the anathemas of one-eyed bigots she has somehow managed to trip her light fantastic way to the top of the mummers Olympian

mountain, and is now destined to be crowned Goddess of Theatredom. Who is responsible? What does it matter? This man builds a temple and that man teaches by precept and example. The Gods choose their own instruments to do their work. Men are their pawns. In this man's heart they put the greed of gold, in another's soul the love of fame. They merely use ether instead of steam. They fire the brain to ambition with the promise of heartsease in the future. In this cosmos there is a love of power and in that a desire for contentment, and before every man's eyes is a phantom to lure him to his work and his destiny. Each man builds he knows not why, but thinks he knows, so the work goes on, and the Gods prevail. My Lady is a Goddess. The Goddess of Theatredom. I am one of her votaries. I make this obeisance at her shrine.

My Lady's Advancement.

II.

ALTHOUGH the people who coined the caption, "Advanced Vaudeville," have retired, they have given us a term worth considering. The term "Advanced Vaudeville" is a large one, because of the wonderful possibilities it suggests to the imagination.

Considering the elasticity of the term "Vaudeville," and the great improvement made in this form of amusement in the last few years, Vaudeville advanced may be construed to mean an entertainment composed of all that is best in the dramatic, operatic, and concert fields; in fact, in every field of amusement. It depends on how far it advances. It is possible that it may change the whole present order of theatrical entertainment altogether. It may be the dawn of a new era of theatricals. The discontented playgoer may at last come into his own. All your Ibsenites, Maeterlinckers, Yeatsmen and Shawnees may at last have their aesthetic appetites appeased. Under certain conditions it would not

only be possible, but comparatively easy, to make as much improvement in present vaudeville as the present vaudeville entertainment is an improvement upon the old-time variety show. And as a vaudeville entertainment is supposed to be so varied as to contain something to please everybody, it remains now for those who have so long deplored the commercial part of theatricals, and who have argued so strenuously for the uplifting of the play and the stage to grasp this opportunity, and see to it that every advanced vaudeville entertainment shall contain some offering of that high educational order of dramatic art (albeit in tabloid form) to which they claim the drama should be dedicated. Once vaudeville becomes recognized as the only profitable purveyor of excerps from the best art of all fields of amusement, and its interpreters have become recognized as the highest class of artists—and who knows how many a mute, unconscious Maeterlink, Yeats or Ibsen may yet be unveiled and encouraged. And therefore, those who believe in the higher purpose of the drama will find in this erstwhile despised medium, this very frolicsome fairy at whom they pursed their lips in contempt, the only possible caterer to their tastes: because, seated in the same theatre with them will be people who have come to see another portion of the varied entertainment. And who knows but that some of those less cultured brethren may thereby be swindled into a

taste for these so-called higher essays? Grant this, and its educational function is settled. But the point is this: that Jones, who pays his money to laugh at Ezra Kendall's monologue, helps to make profitable an amusement enterprise that also caters to Smith, who pays to see Forbes Robertson, or E. H. Sothern, in a scene from "Hamlet," or Arnold Daly in a Shaw tabloid, or Junie McCree, in a character impersonation, and vice versa. It has been said that "there is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune," and these are the flood tide days for the vaudeville artists. Everywhere there is tribulation over the fact that Klaw & Erlanger have retired from the fight, and so there should be; but every person who earns his living on the stage should encourage other competition for the future. As to the success of future competition there can be no doubt, and here is the point: With competition, everybody wins—public, performers, and all. This is so obvious that it seems superfluous to state it, but it is necessary to state it, just the same. The performers of America should exert their best endeavors to apprise the public of the fact, that vaudeville will only continue to advance with competition; and without it, the quality of the shows must deteriorate. But as Klaw & Erlanger have quit, whence is this future opposition coming? If they who control most of the theatres in America have failed in this undertaking, who

is going to succeed? There is one force outside of this capable of coping with the situation, and that force is in possession of the only answer to the problem. That is, a circuit of theatres, owned and controlled by actors. This could easily be accomplished by co-operation on the part of the actors, but it would take a little time. It would not be difficult, however, though it seems difficult, to make the actors understand. It seems difficult to convince them that it is just as easy for them to own their own theatres collectively as it is for them to own their own homes individually. All that is needed is co-operation and a theatrical investment fund. It is not necessary for them to try to be managers. Their inability in this respect is well known. They just need to own them and to control them; and when they do this, they will have settled this question for all time. Competent managers can be engaged to work just and earnestly and as honestly for a salary or on a percentage basis for a co-operative body of artists as for any syndicate or trust. And with five per cent. of their salaries, a few hundred artists could, in a few years' time, own sufficient theatres to forever preclude the possibility of any syndicate eliminating competition, or of any combination of capital menacing their welfare. Each artist could receive shares to the amount of his weekly five per cent. in the fund, and when a theatre can be purchased or built, they can buy it or build it. Five per

cent. of the salaries of artists playing in vaudeville this year amounts to hundreds of thousands of dollars—perhaps millions—and now is the time for such a fund to be established, though it should have been done while these opposing forces were fighting.

This plan has been preached to the actors of America for seven years. Now, they awake to a realization of the necessity of it. The public should somehow be made to understand that, when competition ceases, back to their former fields will fly all those big attractions from the drama, the opera, and the concert stage, and yet, under the conditions of competition, the influx from these fields into vaudeville must of necessity become better and brighter. There has always been competition in vaudeville, with the possible exception of some of the Keith Houses; but there was never a time when Mr. Keith did not fear competition, and in proportion to such competition as he has experienced, his entertainments have improved. Ordinary vaudeville has become so attractive that, in certain cities where there has been no competition, the public is inclined to say: "Oh! Mr. Jones has always given us good vaudeville, why should we patronize some one else?" When in truth Jones may have been selling them lemons. But the public is usually slow to learn. It is generally wrong about everything worth knowing, especially about life. Thought has ever been the

guest of the few, and a regard for truth and justice of fewer still. That is why the paths of progress are paved with the bones of pioneers. The public loves to get used to a rut and remain in it. It is easier than thinking. Most people are credulous, and will always remain so; and these vaudeville managers who have had things pretty much their own way, so to speak, in the last few years, have gradually educated their patrons to the belief that the theatre is *THE* thing, and therefore, in those cities where competition has been eliminated and as there is only one theatre where the public may enjoy vaudeville, why, of course, vaudeville is Jones' theatre, and Jones' theatre is vaudeville. The theatre and its class of entertainment become identified, and the silly public never stops to think that it is a very clever plan on the part of an unopposed manager to fool it into the belief that vaudeville is impossible outside of his own theatre; but the moment opposition comes upon him, he rushes to get some real acts, and well-known names. Compare the quality of entertainment in any vaudeville theatre that has opposition with one that has not. Everybody knows what class of vaudeville has been served to the Chicago public for years. Why? Because there was no opposition. But how the quality changed in that city the day Klaw & Erlanger opened the Auditorium with opposition vaudeville. The following are the acts billed to appear at the Majestic Theatre,

Chicago, during the week of October 13, 1907, the same being the opening week of the Auditorium:

May Irwin;
Hilda Spong & Company;
William Courtleigh & Company;
Moto Girls;
The Trenadians;
Spessel Brothers and Mack;
Clarks Hasardous Globe;
Jack Wilson & Company;
George Austin Moore;
Corbrey Brothers;
The Torettos;
Adele McNiel.

The salary list at the Auditorium may have even exceeded this, but did ever Chicago present a regular bill of equal importance, or one approaching it in excellence before? No. Well, then, who benefited by the opposition? Obviously, the public. But as the public pays little or no attention to theatrical competition, and as the welfare of the artist depends almost entirely upon it, it is his duty to educate the public to the importance of it. No one will contend that when a corporation or syndicate has made opposition impossible that it will expend four or five times as much as is necessary for its raw materials. The history of all trusts and syndicates prove the contrary to be true. In other words, if a manager is running a successful vaudeville theatre in a cer-

tain community, with matters so fixed that there is no opposition to him, and no cause for him to fear any in the future, will he expend $4,000.00 per week on an entertainment when he can fill his theatre nightly, and satisfy his patrons by an outlay of $2,000.00 weekly? Will he, in other words, make the public a present of $2,000 worth of entertainment every week? Of course, he will not; and, therefore, when competition ceases permanently, vaudeville is doomed. On the other hand, under the impetus of opposition, there is no telling how far vaudeville may advance, especially in America. This is the one country where this form of entertainment is most suited to the general taste, because our own public is composed of all nationalities; and in a high-class, well-diversified vaudeville entertainment something may be found to please each and all.

Each European nation may be looked upon as a large family, each of which has developed more or less similar tastes, while ours is a nation composed of all the families of the earth, all with different tastes, and all in different states of development. What is so well suited to them as vaudeville?

But let us consider this question from the cultured person's point of view.

Six years ago, in an address to the Old Playgoers' Club, of London, England, an audience of dramatists, critics, novelists and playgoers, the writer predicted that the day was not far distant when the

patrons of the English Music Halls and the American vaudeville theatres would be witnessing a future Henry Irving playing a scene from "The Merchant of Venice," and a future Dan Leno doing a turn of comic songs on the same stage, during the same evening.

In the debate which followed, Cecil Raleigh, the playwriter, made use, for the first time, of the term "tabloid drama," and it is almost certain that the best dramatic works of future authors may be compressed into this form of offering. They say it takes months to play a Chinese drama, and sometimes two or three nights are required for the enactment of a German tragedy, while our best modern American and English plays would run about two hours if intermissions were omitted. Then, why not the real masterpieces, of one hour's duration, in vaudeville? But we must keep advancing Our Lady, in order that she may discover our genius.

It is well known that an Ibsen drama cannot be made financially profitable in this country at the present time, the reason being that there are not enough Ibsenites to support it. The same may be said of the plays of Maeterlinck, Yeats, and in some cases of Shaw. Even Shakespeare is said to spell financial ruin. And when you stop to think that we have only one or two actors in all America who play these higher forms of the drama, and of the thou-

sands of people all over the country who nightly enjoy little serious, artistic efforts on vaudeville programmes the opportunity for further advancement in this direction, seems hopeful. But we must have competition; and now it seems that we must make this competition ourselves. It is the only way; it is the sure way; and it is absolutely practicable. The situation is in the hands of the actors. If they have the courage of enterprise, then success is assured.

My Lady's Suitors.

III.

BUT, as has been said, My Lady Vaudeville has had her suitors as well as her votaries. And these suitors conceived of a plan whereby to enmesh her and keep her all to themselves. So they wove a net which they called a Managers' Association, to hold her in corral. They are, however, no more to blame for so doing than the sun is to blame for shining. The merging of kindred enterprises for the purpose of control is the natural outcome of that desire for power which is in every man's heart more or less. It is merely the necessary modern expression of man's oldest impulse. They could not help doing so. It was to be. It is the modern commercial way of things. But these suitors or managers themselves most probably do not know that they would have been powerless to have done otherwise. It is given to only a few to know that we are all pawns on this checker board of nights and days, else the game could not go on. The eternal run of the universal comedy would be at an end. The play would have to be

discontinued if we knew *why* we played our parts. We know *our* why but do not know the *great why*.

And so these gentlemen, while laboring under the impression that they were each and all working for themselves, were really beautifying My Lady's surroundings and causing her advancement, thereby rendering a service for all the people. But what they probably would not admit, and perhaps do not believe, is the great assistance they have had through opposition, or the greater help they could have had through co-operation.

However, there is no criticism for them here; as men many of them are good fellows and most of them are men of high enterprise who doubtless think they are patient, just and right.

If credit were a thing to be spoken of, unquestionably to the late Tony Pastor and to Mr. B. F. Keith and his clever lieutenants should go the palms for first making My Lady Vaudeville possible. But Mr. Pastor operated only in New York City on a comparatively small scale. Mr. Keith built her first temple and swept the mire and slush from her pathway. He worked hard to banish vulgarity, slang and profanity from her stages, and succeeded. He brought ladies and gentlemen and children to her temples, and served them with clean and interesting entertainment. So also at nearly the same time did his then rival, Mr. F. F. Proctor; and shortly afterwards, Mr. Percy Williams, who rejuvenated My

Lady when she was growing weary of reiteration and the same old grind. He brought from Europe a new influx of stars, paid them enormous salaries, and succeeded in making them more successful than European artists had hitherto been in this country. So everybody woke up and took notice, and My Lady took on a new smile. Incidentally Mike Shea, of Buffalo (who, next to Mr. Williams, is the most popular Roman of them all among those who play for him), Hammerstein, the imperturbable; Mr. Chase, of Washington; Harry Davis, of Pittsburg, and all those managers farther West readjusted their field glasses, raised the ante and drew cards. Drawing cards.

Who benefited? Obviously the public—the performer and the manager. And it must be borne in mind that at this time Mr. Williams did not belong to the Association; although it must also be admitted that since the reformation of the association all those managers have continued to advance the standard of entertainment given at their theatres (with the exception, of course, of occasional freaks). But then again, it should not be forgotten, that while their entertainment has continued to improve, they have continued to experience opposition. And this opposition has been principally one man, Mr. WILLIAM MORRIS. This man has for years pushed a booking desk up against millions of dollars of capital and made it win out. Since the

first disruption of the Association, caused by the White Rats episode eight years ago, Mr. Morris has succeeded in either keeping these managers in opposition to each other, or furnishing outside competiton, which caused a continuation of advancement in Vaudeville. Before they all rejoined each other, as fast as one of these managers for whom he did the booking would be lured into the syndicate, as if by magic other theatres would open their doors to Vaudeville with Mr. Morris always in the van. And when it was thought that his last shot had been fired, that his last manager had capitulated, Lo! next morning the public learned that Klaw & Erlanger, with their many theatres were in the field arrayed on the side of Mr. Morris. And though this powerful syndicate eventually also retired, this resourceful man is still in the game, fighting harder than ever, with many theatres and, it is said, with financial resources of millions of dollars behind him. Surely, both the public and the performer owe him a debt of gratitude.

But if one man can control many Theatres and enlist the backing of millions of dollars of capital in the face of great opposition, why is it that many men can not control a few Theatres when their independence and, in fact, their artistic salvation, depends on it, and when they are in a position to collectively produce the capital themselves?

But as a matter of fact, the stage people of Amer-

ica stand on much firmer ground than would seem even by the above statement. They have an organization of several thousand members, "The White Rats of America," with experienced theatrical men at the helm, capable of the management of theatrical enterprises. This organization has stood all the tests of eight years, and has continued to grow and profit by its experience. It is now in a position to co-operate with the citizens of any city in the United States in the control and management of Vaudeville Theatres, and it is well known that in nearly every city in America there are men who would be anxious to invest in such profitable enterprises were they not afraid of the power of Vaudeville monopoly, or if they could be assured of not being handicapped in the securing of talent. And this assurance The White Rats of America are now in a position to give, as well as to prove the practicability of theatrical co-operation. The plan of which is simple in the extreme. The members of the White Rats by paying into their own accounts a certain percentage of their earnings, which they have heretofore paid for booking purposes (but which, under this arrangement, they receive shares for) would produce a constantly growing fund to be used in the purchase of 51 per cent. of the shares of Theatres in different cities. This majority of shares in each enterprise would forever preclude the possibility of Vaudeville monopoly and, by giving the actors

control of their own Theatres, prevent the merging of opposite interests which invariably tend to threaten their salaries and advancement; and, as the membership of the White Rats comprise or control nearly all the leading acts on the Vaudeville stage in the United States and Europe (it must be remembered that they are affiliated with all the theatrical organizations of Europe), they are in a position to guarantee those managers and citizens with whom they co-operate a supply of talent at least equal to that which any opposition can possibly secure. It is not intended that the organization would run the Theatres, they would merely control them for the purpose of their own protection.

The management or directorate of each Theatre would, by agreement, have full power to run their own Theatres in their own way, so long as they gave clean and intellectual entertainment, and at the same time have access to advice from the Theatrical experts of the directorate of the organization. Besides, the natural sentiment that favors co-operation as opposed to monopoly, the home directors of the Theatres and shareholders of same in each city would have their following and influence, and be able to get their side of the argument to the Vaudeville patrons of their own communities, and thereby obviate the handicap that strangers sometimes suffer when investing capital in new territory, where they are looked upon in the light of invaders when

they enter in opposition to the established order of things Theatrical. While the responsibility of selecting the talent being removed from the organization to the home management would do away with any cause for friction or internecine strife in the organization as regards favoritism, partiality or prejudice in the booking of acts. This idea has been constantly preached by the present writer to the Vaudeville artists of America for the last eight years. It was one of the first ideas promulgated after the inception of the order. It has now taken root and will blossom, but, people on the outside are now trying to do the very same thing with no organization behind them whatsoever. Theatrical co-operation between the Actor-Manager and play-goer must come about.

It is the natural culmination of the commercial trend of stage affairs that has evolved through many years. Trusts, Syndicates and Managers' associations merely pave the way.

Even outside of the theatrical firmament in the great affairs of earth, co-operation between so-called masters and men it is also coming about. It is so written in the book of the world. Surely it is time to consider it seriously when so great an authority as Andrew Carnegie in his new book "Problems of To-day" gives it as the final solution this side of socialism. The January World's Work Magazine in quoting from Mr. Carnegie's book calls it a re-

markable forecast of the continued improvement in the position of labor, *till profit sharing does its perfect work and the laborer and the capitalist become the same man.* Mr. Carnegie says *"The joint-stock form opens the door to the participation of labor as shareholder in every branch of business.* In this the writer believes, says he, lies the final and enduring solution of the labor question. Nothing can stand against the direct management of owners. We are only pioneers whose duty is to start the movement, leaving to our successors its full and free development as human society advances. He tells of the beginnings made by the Carnegie Steel Company many years ago by making from time to time forty-odd young partners, who paid for their interest in the business by their notes, payable only out of the profits of the business. And he points out that just as the mechanical world has changed and improved, so the world of labor has advanced from the slavery of the laborer to the day of his absolute independence, and now to this day, when he begins to take his proper place as "the *capitalist-partner* of his *employer.* We may look forward with the hope to the day when it shall be the rule for the workman to be *partner* with *capital."* Mr. Carnegie also quotes the great sociologist and philosopher, John Stuart Mill, as follows: "The form of association, however, which, if mankind continue to improve, must be expected in the end to predomi-

nate, is not that which can exist between a capitalist as chief and work-people without a voice in the management, but the association of laborers themselves on terms of equality, *collectively owning the capital with which they carry on their operations, and working under managers elected and removable by themselves.*" This is the same idea that the writer of the present book has for many years been trying to apply to the theatrical profession for the purpose of removing it from the control of syndicates and placing it in the joint control of the playgoer and performer. And until this plan is consummated and in working effect no great progress can be made. And as the suggestion does not come from the managers, it is up to the Actors. It is their move. The situation is in their hands. All they need is the courage of enterprise. For surely it must be clear to them, that neither Mr. William Morris nor any other successful independent manager could hope to succeed were they not assured of the support and encouragement of My Lady Vaudeville, for keeping open competition in her Temples. Who is My Lady Vaudeville? As has been said, she is destined to become the goddess of Theatredom. She had lighted her torch on the highest hill. Who are her subjects? They are members of an organization known as The White Rats of America, the history of which same society the following story aims faithfully to record.

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ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
R L

GRAND ORDER OF WATER RATS (OF ENGLAND) 1908

The Water Rats of London.

IV.

"MAKE me drunk, and have lots of fun with me, boys!" said the young man who had just been put through the initiation. "Make me drunk, and have lots of fun with me, because I am here at your service!"

A yell of laughter from a crowd of good fellows assembled together in a lodge room, many years ago, in London, England, was the spontaneous response to the above remark, which was made in a speech of thanks by the newly initiated member into the Grand Order of Water Rats. Great hilarity had been caused in putting him through the initiation, which was full of the usual, harmless fun of good fellowship, the overessence of high-flowing spirits and merry hearts. And now the "making" was over, and the newly made brother was called upon for a speech. He was a tall, straight-backed youth, with wavy hair and deep set eyes. His knock knees and large feet had called forth many witty remarks by the members, and caused great fun while he was being put through the postures incident to the ritual

of initiation. "Make me drunk, and have lots of fun with me," said he, "for, now that I am *of* you, I want to be *with* you, and I hope to be *of* you a long time, and I wish to be *with* you all the time that I am *of* you. Everybody is more or less laughable, if we only knew it. To-night is my turn. We will laugh to-night at me, and everybody is also drunk with something: Some with power, some with gold, some with fame, some with their own self-importance. I have been too sober for a long time, so make me drunk with the spirit of yours, and have lots of fun with me."

Of course, the speaker was joking, conscious of his own physical irregularities, he was nevertheless capable of laughing good naturedly at his lack of symmetrical proportions, and so he joined in the fun with great glee, and said: "That's right, boys, make me drunk, and have lots of fun with me!"

His aptness to catch their whims, and laugh with them at himself, made a good impression with the merry little coterie of Bohemians, and he was voted a good fellow by all the members. But though he spoke in jest, the gods, who are better jokers than mortals, heard his speech, and answered his plea. For it was in this same fraternal hall that, all unconsciously, he was made drunk with a new spirit and purpose in life; and it was among these same light-hearted merry makers that his ears were given to drink of a wonderful, mystical song, and his

heart to feed on the hope that was born on Hermon's Holy Hill.

The Grand Order of Water Rats was a little society of Music Hall Artists, numbering at this time about forty members. Twelve of them had at first drifted together through the circumstance of each having won several sovereigns on the speed performances of a little race horse called "The Water Rat" (as James Finney, the then champion swimmer, was also facetiously called), and from which said pony they took their name. The pony was owned by Joe Elvin and Jack Lotto, and this twain had previously apprised their confreres of the advisability of getting "on" when he ran. And so when the "good thing" "came off," or, rather, when the good pony came in, they all met to celebrate the event, and from this germ grew their Order. Meetings, which at first were casual, became regular; feelings, at first convivial, had become fraternal. Other members of the profession were permitted to join, the qualifications being high standing as a good fellow, and recognition as an artist playing the "Halls" of London. But quite conservatively did they take in these new members. One objection by any member, even with no reason given, constituted disqualification of a proposed candidate. Hence, they were all friends, and, oh! what merry-hearted gentlemen they were, to be sure! How generous to their less fortunate brothers of the outer world!

How happy in each other's society! How charitable to each other's faults! Joe Elvin, Dan Leno, Wal Pink, Jack Lotto, Paul Martinetti, and some half dozen others, at first; and then came Gene Stratton, Paul Cinquivalli, Little Tich, R. G. Knowles, Tennyson & O'Gorman, Jim Maco, Will Oliver, and the rest, till they numbered nearly a half hundred in a few years. All Stars in the merry world of Make Believe! All geniuses of laughter and song, and all boys—just boys—forever! To remain young is to be great, and it was a great moment when these merry fellows, who used to make the best and worst of foggy old London, laugh and forget, set apart a night to meet each other and regale, for they soon began to study plans for the betterment of their conditions, and the assistance of those of their calling who were in need; and, although they were exclusive and small in numbers, they were now a great fraternity nevertheless. Soon they had rules of order, by-laws, etc., and all the paraphernalia and ceremonials necessary to a deliberate assembly, as well as the spirit that goes to make Brotherhood. Wal Pink was a word-wizard, who had all London singing his songs and laughing at his farces. He wrote them a fitting ritual, filled with wit and song, and just enough of the oversoul for some fellow to come along and understand; and this fellow came along. They remained exclusive, not through pride, but because they knew their pro-

fession, and they preferred to go slow and be sure. This naturally quickened the desire of others to join them. Such are the ways of men. It is always Mahomet and the Mountain over again. The founders were real, and other real followers came knocking at their gates, and were taken into the fold. Of course, there were exceptions, but no emergency could arise to make them careless lest they court disaster. Primarily, there are no effete or factitious aristocracies. A few real fellows have started everything that is wholesome and lasting in the world; and, whether it be a little society or a great republic; whether it be a kingdom or a religion, it remains great only so long as the original spirit pervades it.

All of Christianity that is real is Christ—bare headed, bare hearted, and in bare feet beneath the stars; the rest is mockery. Moses is all Judaism. All that is real in our own republic was put in the Declaration and Constitution, and a few strong men have preserved society during all times. But whether we are great republics, or little Bohemian societies, whom, to take seriously, seems incongruous, we are still all men and women, and our affairs are interesting in proportion to our nearness to each other, and as we are all fools, most partial and patient to our own kind, when we know them, let us understand that in this same gay footlight realm of winking eyes and twinkling feet, there are great-hearted

gentlemen who saunter through life in the garb of motley, and such were the founders of the Grand Order of Water Rats of London, England; and such was their condition on the night when our young man who laughed at himself joined them.

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THE DROMIO.

The Dromio.

V.

THIS young fellow was a curious mixture of many contradictions. He was about twenty-two years of age. He performed in the Music Halls. He called himself a mountebank, even in after years when he achieved a certain success. Had you asked him his status in the world, he would have answered you with one word, "Mountebank." So we will call him Dromio, Fool, Busker, Punchinello, or what not. He was an American, from somewhere in Michigan. His father's people were from Vermont, and it was said their forbears had arrived on the Mayflower. His mother's people were Irish, which, perhaps, accounts for the dualism of his nature, his violent impetuosity, his despondency, his ardent hopes, his laughter, his blank despair, his tolerance, his impatience, and all the other infections of the blood which fate instills into the veins of her human playthings to make them dance in the merry-go-round of life. But whatever may have been his natal qualities, his early environment moulded him into a

vagabond. His youth was spent among bootblacks and newsboys, instead of at school, and he never afterwards learned to be quite respectable. The industrial community where his early boyhood was spent was composed of artisans from every clime. It was also at that time a Mecca for crooks of every calibre—bad men from all over the world, refugees, fugitives, outcasts—a thousand or more of them in a little boom town of twenty-odd thousand inhabitants. Dromio fraternized with them all, and learned their wiles and ways. He sang and danced for them at the Free and Easy Halls. Before he was fourteen he knew every trick and lure of the nether world. However, being, as he often said afterwards, a natural born fool, he never learned to be a knave. He could neither rob men nor judge them. He could not understand how men could do so, and perhaps that is just why men could never understand him. He was a natural mimic, and could imitate with equal facility the dialects of the Swedes who worked in the sawmills and built the ships on the river, or the English, Scotch, Welsh and Irish boilermakers, blacksmiths and moulders, who made the machinery for the ships and mills, or the French Canadians, who cut down the pine trees in the woods during the winter, and drove the logs down the river in the springtime. He had had very little schooling. His mother died when he was four years of age. His father, a busy man who had married

again, sent him to school, but he did not go very often, yet he learned to read and write, and that constituted about all of his schooling. He excelled at swimming, rowing, and skating, and could box. On the sawdust heaps, beside the lumber mills, he learned to be an acrobat and contortionist. He could execute any kind of a step dance, and possessed a good singing voice. In short, at fourteen years of age he knew everything that a wild harum scarum boy delights in, instead of wiser things that he should have learned. And it was with this stock in trade, at this age, that he ran away from home and became a tramp and a mountebank. He wandered all over the United States, beating his way on trains, and mixing with all classes of wanderers. He followed the county fairs and the races; he joined circuses; became a circus clown, leaper and tumbler; he made the announcements in the ring, and performed in the concerts. Then he became a negro minstrel, an actor in plays; then a performer on the variety stage. Before he was twenty years of age he had gained some reputation on the variety stage with a little partner named Quigg.

He began to write songs and little sketches for the varieties, and, though he knew nothing of the laws of music or metre, they were generally successful. Up till now he has never read a book, never seen a great play, or an opera. He had never heard a sermon or an oration. He had never heard

a great poem recited. He had never been in a picture gallery, or been taught anything directly by anybody. Yet he became ambitious, and began to read books, and his chums said he had gone mad. They cited, as absolute proof of his mental unbalancing, that he had actually commenced to read Shakespeare's plays! They said "he's gone off his nut; he's reading Shakespeare!" Yet what a revelation those plays were to him! He lived in a new world, all brightened and beautiful. He devoured them from an old volume, which he purchased for fifty cents at a second-hand bookstall. He read them over and over again. He laughed and wept with a delight almost hysterical. He would wander into silent woodland places and declaim passages from all the masterpieces. Oh! why had he not read them before? All his life had been wasted. And now his manner changed. He looked about himself and into his own heart. Who was he? What was he? Why was he? The perennial questions when the soul awakens. His voice took on a softer tone. He began to wonder, and wish to be graceful. Yes, it is a fact, a curious, laughable ridiculous fact, that this same awkward, ungainly young vagabond did really wish to be graceful in word and action. His ways became gentle, and this change of manner made it all the more evident to his confreres that he had really gone mad. So they pitied him and laughed. Then he bought more books, written by poets and philoso-

phers, and buried himself in them. He was now of age, and a comedian named Ryland, who had a reputation in the music halls of England, and whose partner had died in America, asked him to go to London and play with him in the English halls. Dromio jumped at the chance, partly to get away from his old environment, partly to see Europe and study. So they sailed away to England.

All literature is biography; all true autobiography is confession. If we could truthfully learn what an ass really thinks of himself, or an ant, for that matter, it would be interesting, and surely not less so, a human being, even though he be young and foolish. And so, as we have seen the outer shell of this mountebank in the embryo, let us take a peep at the inner part of him with his own eyes while he is at sea.

He would tell you anything of himself for the asking, because investigation had become a passion with him, and he looked upon himself as a part of the universal phenomena of life, which should be an open book for the study of all mankind. To be happy, men must know each other. He would be simple. Men would call him a fool, but he had become used to that. They had already said he was mad. Man is just a part of night and day. In proportion to his secretiveness is he unnatural, ungenerous, deceptive, ignorant. And yet blameless for being so, because all terms are relative, and the

secretive man is merely living in the stone age still. The rose's perfume is its heart's confession. All the stars of the universe, all the incomprehensible beauty of the world, all phenomena of growth and decay, are merely the expression of some higher power trying to say, "This is me." Every true poem that was ever written, every picture painted. every melody that ever gushed from the heart of genius, is some one trying to say, perhaps unconsciously, THIS IS ME. But back of it all there is a deeper cause that makes it so, and therefore the secret of happiness is to laugh with the deeper cause that makes fools of men, for the humor of the gods. To keep your own self sweet, and clean, and kind, not to judge, not to praise or blame, but just to laugh with the deeper cause, this is to be in harmony. And so, as our young friend preferred to bare his own heart to the world, let us look at the secret springs of his actions.

What was the cause of his evolution? For he did evolve, this fool, even amid all the vanities, inanities, self-deception, vices, follies, poses and poises peculiar to his calling; it was still his queer fate to burst the chrysalis and find his wings. To become an idealist and dreamer, a worshiper of the truth that is beauty and the beauty that is truth in all their forms of "nature's naked loveliness." And to be brave to express what he felt in the face of hollow-hearted ridicule, defeat,

disaster and death. He could neither applaud nor pity himself, because he believed that man did not merit either praise or blame. "The Midsummer Night's Dream" had unfolded to him the whole scheme of human life. Surely he thought some angel, bent on revealing the humor of the prompters behind the veil, must have guided the pen that wrote this comedy. Perhaps no one ever interpreted its meaning so clearly as this same wandering fool. To him it was the most real of the Shakespeare plays; therefore, the most laughable. Laughter of the right kind was holy to him. All the mystery of our misunderstandings, all the mysticism of human existence is unfolded in that evanescent, iridescent dream. Words may not explain or interpret it. Life is there for those privileged to read the symbols. Dream swindled life. The jealous Fairy King, and Puck, his errand boy, with whom you may laugh, if you know him. Emerson was wrong when he said life was a comedy *without* laughter. You *may* laugh, if you know the gods, and their ways and are willing.

To be great is to be misunderstood; but you must try to be understood. This will, however, insure a misunderstanding of you—and "the rest is silence." Such are the ways of the invisible labelers.

What strange divergencies there are in human fates. How many million years between this man and that who talk together on the busy street, or

follow the same calling. This man counts dollars all his life, and dies with his ears mistuned to the jingle of gold, and here his brother, masked in the same kind of flesh and bones, picks a fossil from the ledge of a mountain, looks at it, and tells you the age of the earth. Another extracts a drop of your blood, and tells you it is the universe in miniature. On what slender threads do hang our destinies. "The Midsummer Night's Dream" made our Mountebank a poet. Ye gods! A poet without words or the laws of words. Where were they to be found? In dictionaries and grammars. Well, he would have them. He would study. He would delve in the ologies, onomies, and isms. He was still young. He would learn about the stars and the laws of the universe. Even an ass may learn something when struck hard. He had been struck hard. Let them laugh and call him mad. He would be crazy in his own way. Bottom was an ass and a weaver. He was an ass at bottom, he would be a weaver as well, a word weaver. He would work hard, he would study, he would fit himself for a better place. His personality seemed to invite aggression. Very well, outside of his work he would keep it in seclusion for awhile, and try to learn something. He would grow. He would get more books and learn. He would study. He would learn to make men think and feel. So far he had only made them laugh. Well, that seemed more to

him now than before, but he would learn to express himself. He must study in real earnest. He had seen life with his own eyes; now he would see it through the eyes of the great, who had recorded their impressions in books. Were there more writers like Shakespeare? he wondered. Perhaps not. Anyway, he would find out; he would read them all. Perhaps he would become a great actor. Or, perhaps, after he had educated himself, he would leave the stage and become a great teacher of some kind. Ah! what funny dreams we have when we are young, when we feel the first thrill of mental blossoming! Here was a vigorous, visionary young vagabond, a boy in man's guise, mapping out a career of greatness, and willing to fit himself for it when it was to be his queer destiny forever to wear the ass's head and weave the wordy yarn. To be laughed at always, somewhat in contempt, and to almost afright everybody except Titania, the Little Gold Lady, the fairy queen of his life's brief dream. No wonder he laughed at himself. "What fools these mortals be," says Puck, and Puck is right. Whatsoever seems to be such and so to them is the reverse, or nearly so, in the eyes of the winking gods. Pucks of fairyland, who make you think you are this, and then label you something else, and knowing you are neither one, sit down and laugh at you. They are the authors of all our actions, and their sense of humor is sublime. If the outer husk

were the true expression of the inner soul, vampires would not be masked in angel faces, or grafters have happy smiles. There were times when Dromio thought that every sign of him in the eyes of men belied some inner note of his being, as if he had undertaken a contract prenatally or been condemned before birth to a desire to express himself through these antithetical signs. To make himself understood through contradictions in spite of men's natural faith in their own eyes. At least, such were the intensity of his hopes, and the impossibility of their fulfilment, that they gave birth to such fancies which in turn made him laugh with the Robin good fellows who planned it so, and say: "I am in league with Puck against myself, for some purpose of the play. I know not the why or the wherefore." However, he did not talk in this vein now, nor for many years to come, not until the queerness of his fate was burned into his heart.

Just now he is musing on the deck of the steamer and watching the aquatic acrobats, the billows, leap over each other while the good ship swaggers like a tipsy fairy on her way to Liverpool. He wondered why the fates had let him grow to manhood before opening his mind to the importance of its own development. At his age all men who were meant for anything had their minds stored with the knowledge of the ages and their brains disciplined for prompt action and sustained effort. The same as he

had trained his muscles to fight, swim, run, jump, leap or tumble. While other men had acquired the intellectual weapons to fight the battle of life, he had been fooling his life away learning the tricks of a mountebank; and now this sudden thirst for knowledge that changed him from a gladsome person in the eyes of his companions to a butt for all their jokes. This sudden heart hunger for a sympathy that he could never find, what was the cause of it all? From a weakly boy thrown among outcasts, he had nevertheless built himself into a large frame of a man of brawn, muscle and agility, while the pageant of the world, earth's living panorama, had passed by without his paying much attention to it. He had seen it as in a semi-dream. He thought of what a sorry figure he was sure to cut in starting to school in the college of the world at his age, and yet he must do so. He laughed at himself, but there was a sadness in his laugh. His transformation had softened and saddened him.

The door that reveals the splendor of the world, had been thrown open to him, and the glory of the spectacle frightened and almost stifled him. Everything became very wonderful. All life was a miracle, full of millions of miracles. A leaf of grass was a very wonderful thing—a miracle—in fact, as great a miracle as a star. The foam on the waves that passed the ship, the ship itself, the men and women on it, the ocean and the stars, all miracles! The

stars! Why, he had scarcely ever noticed them before. They were perhaps the most beautiful things God has made. He could gaze on them forever with delight. He tried to talk to some of the passengers about them. They were not interested. They had seen them before, perhaps. But he was seeing them through new eyes, the eyes of his soul. Yes, the world had suddenly become beautiful to him, and for that very reason he seemed to be a discordant note in this same beautiful world. He wondered why he was confused and perplexed, and well he might. Man is little known to himself, and less to his brother man. If this were the life story of the fool, it would perhaps be interesting from a psychological viewpoint to speculate as to whether this metamorphosis of him was merely the awakening of his latent self, or whether some wandering soul, that had already paid with much suffering for an appreciation of beauty, had taken up its abode in his cosmos.

However, this is not the story of his life, but a hasty glance at his many-sided character, which the exigencies of our tale force us to take, in order that we may say what manner of man did thus and so, under conditions that would make men of a less foolish and credulous nature act in an opposite way.

Arriving in London, he played at the music halls with his partner, and was a success. After the anxiety of making his appearance in a new country had

subsided, he gathered unto himself all the books he could buy, and devoured them; philosophers, scientists, poets. He had a quick apprehension, a prodiguous memory, and he hoped to make himself worthy of any position to which he might later aspire. His life was a prayer of gratitude for the accident that had awakened him. He was always alone. No one ever spoke an encouraging word to him. Everybody said he was a fool, and many thought him mad. Each night he played at two or three different music halls with his partner, entertaining the audiences with the most primitive kind of nonsense and balderdash, and by day he studied the masters who have called us from our dead selves into consciousness. His favorites were Shakespeare, Shelley, Byron, Keats, Emerson, Marcus Aurelius, Carlyle, Goethe, Schiller, Balzac, Hugo, Moliere, Dickens, and Rosseau. Of course, he overstudied, and fell into the usual melancholia of all overzealous young students. He became more perplexed and mystified than ever, and fearfully despondent. He began to wonder if, after all, men were not right in their opinion of him. Perhaps he was insane, and, anyway, if not, he was at a terrible disadvantage. He began to depreciate himself. The attitude of his fellows made all his virtues look as faults thrice magnified. He was ashamed of the stuff he did at the halls, and it became hard labor to him. And what was stranger still, he was at the same time almost ashamed of

aspiring to something better. How nearly impossible it is sometimes to escape from our environment. Here was a fellow hypersensitive to slights and sneers, quick to resent insult or injury, strong to defend himself, and who yet was, nevertheless, worn into a state wherein his manner became a sort of a mute apology for daring to hope to fit himself for something better, for daring to study or aspire in any way, and almost for being alive. But he shook himself together. He had hitched his wagon to a star, and he went his own way. He would try to be kind and dare to be real, and he would work, and watch and wait.

The Nightingale.

VI.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON once delineated a legend, which tells of a monk of the Holy Orders, and the Song of a Nightingale. The Stevenson story is not at hand, but the legend is somewhat as follows:

In the olden days, when the world was young, a good monk once wandered from his monastery into a wooden glen, where he heard a bird singing a beautiful song. The bird was a nightingale. The good monk, who had been poring over his breviary as he sauntered on, listened at first almost unconsciously to the song of the bird, and presently he stopped, and listened in earnest, for it was the most beautiful music he had ever heard. After a while he thought that he began to understand the melody. Then he sat down, and listened, and listened, and listened; and when he returned to his monastery there was no one there who knew him, except one very old man, for he had been absent fifty years.

What a dear, sweet, old tale. Filled with thoughts

of the woodland, and the lethean mysteries of life's deeper interest, when viewed through the eyes of the soul. Here is the whole desideratum of human life: Absorbing interest; the interpretation of beauty through any of the manifold mysterious expressions of love; Love, speaking through the voice of life. And of all nature's myriad-formed, many-voiced phenomena, what higher symbol than the nightingale, is there, this side of the stars? How could the absorbed monk count the hours, the years, or the centuries, for that matter, when they all flew by in a moment? He only knew that he was listening, listening, listening to a song, so sweet, that he must try to understand—for the song of Hope was the song that he heard, and the nightingale was the symbol of truth.

Other men hear it in other ways, and to them the clarions of the battle call. To those who will listen, life is as a moment, and death but a door, leading to some other star, where hope whispers, "songs are still beautiful," and love listens still to the story of old. Perhaps only those *will* listen who are destined to understand; but surely for them the world undergoes a phantasmagorical change, and they themselves are born over again. All the poisons of the past, all the hate, scorn and contempt are burnt out in the fire of a new love. The masks fall from the faces of all the people; and men and women play their real parts in the sublime drama. For it

is a drama; it is a play so sublime, that earth's wonder workers of all time, were their intellects blended, could not fathom the heart of its mystery. You know this when you hear the song; and then you know that you have heard something not heard by all, and you wonder why you did not hear it before. Why! half the world is ringing with it! Nor can the jingle of gold, nor the song of fame, drown it. It is yours. Your being is permeated with it. It sings from the stars, and slumbers in women's eyes; in the laughter of children, in man's actions, in the flowers, the market place, the streets, the woods, everywhere!—and only the few are listening. You know you are one of the few. You call to the others to listen, but they only laugh, and run on, shouting: "Fool! Fool! Fool!" You may meet another who has heard an echo of the song, in a different way from your way, perhaps, but still you know that he has heard. He has burnt his way through the world to you. He is yours. Oh! yes, he is yours. Both of you may be playing only parts in the chorus of the great drama; both of you have heard many times before that it was all a play; all the seers have said so, in one way or another, and you thought that you understood; but now you know that you did not understand, but why you did not understand you do not know. You know the story of the song may never be fully told to the ears of man. You know that all the bright com-

rades of yore, who listened and wove their words into spells, succeeded in muttering only a few inarticulate words and passed on, and yet you will try to interpret its mystery. Even you, with hope bursting your heart strings, and the foolish lure in your eyes.

Well, go out into the world, and tell your dreams, if you must. Listen to your foolish bird. But remember this: You must pay. You must pay. You must burn yourself out in a world of iron and gold —in a world that turns a deaf ear to your song. You must paint for eyes that are blind. If you are of the elect, then it follows that only the few may know you. Who else may understand? And yet, in this respect, you may be justified. If the world of men is worth improving, perhaps for a divine reason were you permitted to hear the song; for only those who have *listened* have made it possible that you may dare. Only those who have listened to the nightingale. It is a plaintive strain; at times, in a minor key; but its theme is hope, the bright, the beautiful. All through the night of the ages it sings of the dawn. The ever coming dawn. Time is a delusion. Ten thousand years are less than a moment in eternity, and since time began this song has been calling to us; calling us from the depths of the earth and sea, into the light of the sun and the stars. Calling us from shells, and caves, and trees, up through the myriad stages of evolution, into man-

hood and womanhood. Calling us from subconsciousness into consciousness. Calling us into brotherhood, to teach us who we are, and still calling, calling, calling. We call the song by many names: philosophy, art, science, progress, truth and beauty; but it is the same voice all the time, struggling into divers expressions, through the instrument man, and smaller things. Pope or pariah may hear it; emperor or eremite may listen, but no slave may voice its echo until his soul be free. It is as much a subject of science as of sermon. The spirit of all research; it is the higher voice of the unknown calling death into life, and life's myriad forms, higher and higher, lifting veil after veil.

And so our mountebank, who had now become a sort of a derelict air ship, floating among the clouds, a flotsam on the skyey ether of dreams, one night heard the song of this wonderful bird, and was made whole. It fell upon his spirit as softly as celestial dew upon the face of the dead, and awakened him to new life and effort. Now, he knew why he had been awakened, why he had worn his mask through the world. It was this that he had unconsciously sought for all his life; it was this that he had been prepared to hear. It was only an echo, faint at first, but it reached his inner heart, and developed until it took possession of him. Yes, it was just an echo, but it was an echo of the soul of the world. It was the Nightingale's Song of Brotherly

Love, transposed from the lute strings of Israfel's angel heart into the voice of fellowship, and sung by his half-mad nomad comrades, for some listener to hear.

And Dromio listened and heard.

Though we be ever together, most of us are hidden from each other until our work reveals our dreams.

When Dromio joined the Order of Water Rats, less was known of him than of any member of the Fraternity. He was looked upon, even by those inclined to be charitable in their judgment, as a freakish sort of a fool, who kept to himself and studied dry books. Still, no one objected to him, and his partner, dear old Cliff Ryland, was enthusiastic, and sounded his praises above his eccentricities. So he was permitted to join. Had he brought to them the old, laughing, unawakened young vagabond he had left behind in America, he would possibly have ingratiated himself into their good graces at once, but something had softened him into a negative upon which the world was being painted in new colors. Well knowing their disposition, he at first suspected that they had accepted him just for fun. But this was not so, as they rightly held their little order, with all its joviality, in an esteem too high for such a purpose; and though some incidents occurred to strengthen his first suspicions, he soon

grew to know them better, and they in turn saw him with clearer eyes.

What impressed him most among them was the oneness of spirit that pervaded their meetings, and the miraculous change that could be wrought in a crowd of merry makers by fraternity. In their play world there were the usual jealousies, vanities and feelings, which always accompany the quest of applause and guffaws. But here all was harmony, sanity and good fellowship. Surely, here was a better world—this other side of themselves.

And so in his walks he began to dream of a new life. He asked himself why, if the conditions of a small band of music hall artists were so greatly improved by fellowship, should not all the entertainers of the world come together in one great fraternity? And this idea began to haunt him, until it consumed him. The magnitude of the dream did not dawn upon him at once. It came gradually. It was an accretion. It grew. In the little society he began to have something to say, and he was listened to with respect. The friends he made among them made life more pleasant, and not for him alone was this enhanced happiness. Many good brothers met there who had been acquainted all their lives, but just acquainted—that was all; but they, under the inspiring influence of brotherhood, had grown to know and love each other, instead of going their ways through life, meeting often in their little play

world, but with never a glimpse into each other's hearts.

He wished that this state of affairs could be universal—at least, among the members of his merry tribe: the mountebanks of the earth. Why could they not all be transformed and lifted up from where he had left them at the parting of the ways? Poor dreaming fool!—he had yet to learn many things of the ways of destiny and the human soul.

He was considered by all the members to be too radical, and yet his friends increased. And when the ritual of the Order, being deemed too frivolous for present purposes, needed revising, and as Wal Pink, the author of the first one, was away, the honor of revisor fell to Dromio. He wrote a new one, retaining the spirit of the original, and when he read it to the members assembled, great was their enthusiasm.

Brother Pink, who had then returned, attended the meeting, and proposed that it be adopted as the ritual of the society. The proposition was carried unanimously, and thus it came about that this same sad-faced fool, who had joined them in laughing at himself a year or so ago, now gave them that same foolish heart for the heart of their Order.

Yet, in truth, he gave them only that which they had unconsciously taught him, and what he had all unconsciously learned, in one moment, when he stood alone in a friendless world of darkness and

doubt, and heard within their Fraternal Hall the Song of Brotherly Love.

And now he met The Little Gold Lady; and married her; and everything in the world became still more beautiful! He had left his partner, to go on the dramatic stage, but he could not secure an engagement anywhere. He tramped the streets of London several months, visiting the agencies, but there was nothing for him. How absurd, for a Music Hall Mummer to aspire to Histrionic Honors! He wrote poems, which never found their way into print, so he read them to The Little Gold Lady, and impersonated Shakespeare characters before her startled, but sympathetic, eyes. Soon they began to starve together, so he went back to the Halls alone. He sang songs and told stories. Again he was a success; but the managers, knowing his condition, offered him a starvation salary, and because he did not accept it at once, in great gratitude, they eventually would not engage him at any price.

He was blacklisted everywhere.

He would occasionally appear at a smoking concert, for which he would receive one guinea; or sell a song for a few shillings to some brother professional who perhaps never thought of singing it. But what, he would say, are a few shillings in Bohemia, when a brother soldier in the army of Art and Heart is crippled on the field? What are a few shillings, forsooth, or a few pounds, for that mat-

ter, or several thousand pounds, if you will, and every guilder coined from your own heart's blood, when your own true Brother is in need? And now there was a bay window in Brixton Road, from which looked out the Little Gold Lady daily for Dromio to return with his few shillings, and they were sure of "Kippers" for breakfast the next morning. They lived on bread and jam and marmalade, and the honey of the moon.

THE LITTLE GOLD LADY.

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Mantwa.

VII.

IT was about this time that Dromio met Mantwa —Michael Mantwa; Mantwa, the merry; Mantwa, the brilliant; Mantwa, the wise, the witty, semi-cynical Mantwa. He appeared to Dromio like a demi-god, or semi-devil—Dromio could never tell you which, for Mantwa came into his life at this time, suddenly, like an apparition, or a flash of lightning amid the fogs of London. Wonderful, but dangerous, Mantwa! Dangerous to what? Dangerous to faith. Mantwa was for facts. Dromio for dreams. He was Dromio's anthithisis. He saw everything as Dromio saw it not, believed everything that Dromio believed not in. Where Dromio saw future milleniums. and cities founded on Brotherly Love, Mantwa saw at the end of every dream only disaster, devastation, chaos, death. He was Dromio's anti ego. If he believed that some cruel destiny ruled the world, and that the sun and moon, the splendor of the universe, the ecstacies of passion, the joys of consciousness, and all life's pleasures, were mere lures for

dupes, still he smiled, and smiled, and was really happy. His heart was never weighed down with that sentimentality that made the Dromio such a sad proposition. And though Mantwa looked ever dawnward, yet he saw darkness beyond. He believed in progression, and that, do what you may, the fittest would survive. He believed in the fittest. He looked upon man as a machine, capable of being improved, of course, but he believed that as thought has always been only for the few, and expression for the fewer still, so it would continue to be, and that if mankind were to reach the top of the hill of evolution, we would descend again on the other side, if for no other reason than simply because the earth is round. In short, Mantwa was a patrician, who viewed the world from an intellectual hill of his own. Like Disraeli's Sidonia, his mind seemed to be instructed on all subjects, and his opinions formed. The spirit of mockery was in his speech, and made him appear cynical. Nonchalant of manner, easy of address, a seeming freedom from prejudice or passion on every topic, made Dromio think him something almost supernatural. They were of the same age, and when Mantwa burst upon his horizon, the circumstance was to Dromio like a new dream. If there were times afterwards when Mantwa appeared like a nightmare, why, that is another chapter. He looked like Hope, but he preached Disaster. However, his influence on Dromio's edu-

cation was wonderful. He seemed to know everything and everybody, and he took the fool by the hand, as if he had been a little child, and led him through the galleries of Europe, explaining the works of the masters: painters, musicians, poets, architects. Dromio learned something of each from Mantwa. Mantwa was all critical, Dromio all credulity. One day the Fool ventured to tell him of his dream of an organization that would fraternize the "Merry Makers." Mantwa then undertook to dissuade him from any such project. "Surely," said Mantwa, "you are not thinking seriously of fraternizing all the Pro's of the Music Hall world, or, as you call them, the Vaudevillians?" "That is just what I am thinking of doing," said the Fool. "But people will think you are insane!" "Well," said Dromio, "that's an old joke to me, so I guess I can stand it. I have a message to deliver to them. I want to teach them the power of Brotherly Love, and the value of their collective strength; also, some of the wonderful things that you have taught me: the lives of the masters, their work, their inspirations, the spirit that held them true in the dark hours of their lives. I want to teach them that their profession can be made a high calling, respected by all the peoples of the earth. In short, I wish to educate them in the true sense of the word. Everybody is imperfectly educated. These fellows of mine know more about certain phases of life than

most college professors. My desire is to awaken them to the value of what they know, and teach them the value of that which they do not know. Their profession should belong to themselves, as it belonged in the beginning, and not to so-called impresarios or directors. It is they whom the people come to see, not the managers. I want them to own themselves, their art and all its enterprises; then they will be in a way to acquire some real knowledge of this ant hill on which they sing, laugh, and dance out their lives for the edification of its other inhabitants. And as the beginning can only be made by collective effort, it is my purpose to organize them all over the earth, in a spirit so sacred that, no matter what flag they caper under, their hearts will be loyal to their own wandering tribe, and its cause their own uplifting."

Mantwa smiled incredulously.

"Well," said he, "I have heard of many dreams, but this is the wildest yet! I myself will begin to have fears for your sanity if you continue raving. The accomplishment of such a task is impossible, for every reason in the world, but more so for you than almost anyone else. In the first place, as none of your fellows understand you, you will be guyed off the face of the earth. Because you were ambitious enough to wish to rise out of your environment, you appear to your fellows, who love that same environment, as ridiculous, hence they will

have no faith in you, and because you have dared to seek the light, fate has labeled you as a fool.

"But let us say that you were eminently successful in your profession, or even some great man, with iron in your blood, like Caesar, Napoleon, or other men who conquered worlds, this task would still be impossible, because they will not understand you; they will not want to understand you. They are young, careless, happy, drunk with applause, intoxicated with themselves. They will have only ridicule for you, and no man can withstand ridicule. Dreamers are always damned by those who they would fain try to save. After nineteen hundred years of constant preaching, men have yet to learn the Golden Rule. Christ was not a business man. He was credulous. He thought man could be taught goodness. But you will find that man's experience with his brother makes him skeptical, and your fellows of Follyland are the skeptically extreme. Then, besides, it is not as if you were appealing to, and depending upon a crowd of craftsmen, or a gang of laborers, each of which receives the same wage and has the same social status, and a more or less similar mental apparatus, combined with a sort of a dogged belief that they are victims of fate, and are being imposed upon by their masters, and are therefore always ready to listen to a leader who promises to better their conditions. Such people have all to hope for, and all to gain, while your overestimated and much-

applauded confreres are the highest paid people in the world. What I mean is: they receive more in return for the little they give than any class of people on earth. Was it not Pinero who said of them: 'Theirs is the wit of the washtub and the pathos of the pantry?' "

This last shaft was too much for Dromio. He turned crimson, and his eyes blazed!

"Whoever said that is not only an arrogant fool, but a narrow, unsympathetic ass!" he cried, "for he uses what little brains nature has bestowed upon him to ridicule his less fortunate fellows; therefore, he is not worthy of those brains! Oh! what contempt I have for a scornful person, whom chance has graced with a little fancy, and who, instead of using whatever little gifts he may have for the uplift of his brothers, stands aloof on his little mole hill and scoffs in pretty epigrams, saying in effect, 'Behold! how witty and clever and remote am I!' "

"Well," said Mantwa, "your own mimic world is filled with just this class of spirits, who would spare no brother's feelings if they could make a few others guffaw. For heaven's sake, Dromio, go and study the law of equity! In this life we get just what we give. Your people laugh at the world, and the world laughs at them; they ridicule men and women for money, and the world flings them its pennies and shrugs its shoulders.

"But let us forget the ethics of it, and look at the

practical side of your wild scheme, or dream, or plan, or whatever you choose to call it. As I said, they are not laborers with the same mentality or social status as each other. How are you ever going to reconcile into one Brotherhood people of such divergencies of tastes and temperament as exist in your profession—especially in America, where I believe it is your aim to first put your plan into execution? They not only come into the show world from many different walks of life, but as each one makes his success, he at once holds himself as a sort of a superior being to those who have not as yet received the same amount of applause, guffaws or money. They all receive different salaries, and those who receive less are jealous of those who receive more; those who have not made their hits look upon those who have as flukes."

"Yes," said Dromio, "but I have seen how a Brotherhood alters all this; how it brings them from the narrow centre of self, and makes them look outward on the world."

"Well, you never can convince me," said Mantwa.

"I am sorry you are so prejudiced," said Dromio. "I am sorry to see you look upon any class through the myopia of intellectual pride. I know them to be the soul of charity. The members of no other calling in the world are so ready to assist each other when in need. The members of no other calling in the world do so much in the way of charity to alle-

viate the pecuniary distress of the suffering ones of earth. The members of no other calling in the world are so generous and open hearted, or so charitable to the faults of each other. They are the Knights of song and laughter, and by fraternity they will have still more power to do good, and still more power to improve themselves in those graces, the absence of which you so deeply deplore."

"Bah! you are talking through your hat!" said Mantwa. "I did really have some hope for you before you became obsessed by this mania. You will soon be a socialist, and want to reform the world! But remember this—you are not a Shelley, and though you have learned a few things, your status is still that of a jester, and in proportion to the magnitude of your dream will you be considered by all sensible men as a Fool. I am getting tired. Good day."

Mantwa took his hat and departed. Dromio's heart sank, and he sat for hours with his chin resting on his hand, dreaming and wondering. He almost worshipped Mantwa, and he hated to see the bond between them lessened. But this was the rock upon which they split. It was the old proposition as to whether a man should use his fellows, or try to be of use to them.

They met seldom after this, and when they did meet, it was only to open the old warfare. Mantwa pitied the Fool, and the Fool was sorry for Mantwa.

The Fool studied, wrote, and dreamed, and struggled for a few more years in London, and then one day Joe Elvin came to him and, handing him a handful of sovereigns, said:

"Dromio, go home to America. They don't seem to want you here. Go home, old boy, and come back again when they are ripe for you. We will take care of the Little Gold Lady until you can send for her. Come down to the Lodge next Sunday night and say au revoir."

At the next meeting of the Water Rats, against all his protestations and tears, they voted him his fare to America, and a weekly allowance for the Little Gold Lady, until such time as he could send for her; and they did it in such a way as to try to persuade him that he was a king, instead of a beggar. They toasted him, and sang "He's a jolly good fellow!" They wished him good luck and God speed, and the following week he kissed the Little Gold Lady good-bye, and sailed for America, with his cargo of dreams.

The White Rats.

VIII.

IN America Dromio had one friend—James F. Dolan, by name. Dromio called him Jim the Gipsy. Gipsy Jim of the mellow heart and the starry eyes, and no man is useless while he has a friend, said Stevenson. They had been playmates at school; they learned to sing and dance and fight together, when little boys at home; they had been tramps together in their teens; and Gipsy Jim had taught him many things, principally to say ill of no man, never to harbor revenge, and never to believe an ill rumor of another fellow till personal experience corroborated it. When Dromio had left America, years before, Jim had placed one hundred dollars in the bank, and said: "Dromio, you will perhaps always be broke, no matter how successful you are, so when you want to come home, send for that money."

So, on arriving in New York, Dromio went straight to the home of Gipsy Jim, who, meanwhile, had become a great success in modern Vaudeville.

The meeting was enthusiastic. They had been partners as boys, and as men they remained boys still. The Fool hoped to secure an engagement in the Legitimate drama, but after three or four weeks of tramping up and down Broadway, funds became low in the Gipsy camp, and he arranged to play a week in Vaudeville. He was a success; such a success, in fact, that the event decided his future, and kept the ass's head upon his shoulders.

In his entertainment he wore no make up. He walked from the street on to the stage and simply talked to the audience, unravelling the humorous part of himself. He talked of what he saw on the street, in railway trains, on trolley cars, in hotels, lobbies, public places, and drawing rooms. His engagement was prolonged, and he began to enjoy the first real success he had ever known. He remained in Vaudeville, and paid his debts in England, and sent for The Little Gold Lady. She arrived on the next steamer. Two months later their first baby was born, a little girl. Now, he must stick to Vaudeville, and earn a home. So once again he is harnessed in the Motley which he must forever wear. Well, never mind. Perhaps it will be a better point of vantage from which to realize his dream. For the next five years he played the principal cities of America as a Star in Vaudeville. Whenever he made a friend, he told him of his dream. Nearly all those friends said: "It would be impossible. You

cannot organize actors. They will not stick together. It has been tried often, and always proved a failure," said they—all except a few, among them Jim the Gipsy.

"It's a great idea," said Jim, "and the time is getting ripe for it. These managers are forming themselves into little circuits, and the time will soon come when they will all flock together; then away will go our salaries."

George Monroe and George Reno also encouraged him, and George M. Cohan and Dromio talked over its possibilities for weeks, while dreaming on the sands of Atlantic City, in the summer of '99.

One morning, early in May, 1900, the Vaudeville Artists of the United States awoke and read in the papers that all the principal Managers of Variety Theatres were going to meet and form a gigantic Vaudeville trust, or syndicate, and that the powers of this syndicate were only going to invite one certain favorite Manager of each City outside of Greater New York to join their enterprise: that all others would be tabooed, and that as, therefore, there would be but one Theatre in every town where the Vaudevillain could secure an engagement, the said Vaudevillain's salary would be much reduced. They also read in these papers that there were too many actors on the stage, and that the actor received too much salary anyway; and that the supply of Vaudevillains was greater than the

demand. so the unfit would have to be weeded out, and go back to the mines or the woods. Who were the unfit? The Managers did not say. Afterwards, they said they meant the "Gold-Bricks," this being their term for actors and actresses from the legitimate stage who found Vaudeville profitable, and continued in it, and whose first advent therein had lent tone and prestige and brought a new following to their theatres.

But whatever they may have meant, the news of their contemplated merging struck consternation deep into the ranks of Vaudevillains. "Like thunder 'crost the Bay" it came and struck them dumb everywhere. Late in the following month of May the Managers met and conferred. The Hoffman House was their meeting place, and it was there that Dromio interviewed some of them after their first or second conference. One of them slapped him on the shoulder and laughingly said: "Dromio, we have certainly had you on the pan upstairs."

Some of them crowded around and began to argue. Some good-natured bantering followed, and they had some drinks and smokes, and they continued "kidding" him. "Ah, come on now, Dromio," they said, "you know you fellows get too much money. We are going to give you forty weeks' work a season. Of course, you will not get so much money per week, but look at the work you will have! And we are going to cut out the agent

and book you fellows direct," said they, again slapping him on the shoulder and laughing.

"Yes," said he, "but you will take the agents' five per cent., I suppose?"

"Why, of course, we have got to have money for expenses, you know. We have come all the way from Chicago here, just to help to do you fellows some good. We are your friends, but you don't know it. We are just here to do you good!"

"Yes, to do us *good,*" said Dromio. "Well, the good that you are going to do us won't be anything when compared with the good we will do you, and, as it is getting late, I think I will start in doing you good right away. Good evening, gentlemen," and he bowed himself out.

"Good night, Dromio!" they shouted after him. "Don't take any bad money, Dromio! Ha! Ha! Ha!"

With these words ringing in his ears, he walked up Broadway.

The next day he organized "The White Rats of America," and the day of his dream had dawned.

Until this Society was organized, the artist had always been at the mercy of the manager and middleman. It was the forerunner and inspirer of all the present affiliated theatrical organizations all over the earth. It disrupted and set back for many years, and perhaps forever, the aim of the combined Managers of America to eliminate competition and cor-

ral the entire Vaudeville profession, then in its first bloom of advancement. It raised the standard of this form of entertainment all over the world. It saved the salaries of the artists, and prevented the effacement of their individualities. For with an all-powerful syndicate on one side and unorganized entities on the other, the Vaudeville artist would have eventually become a number on a play card, placed to be read by the audience just before each turn, and the Theatre would have been *The Thing,* and the Artists anything from Number One to Number Ten. It taught the manager that the artists was entitled to some respect. It endeavored to teach the artists to respect and love each other. It held out hope of advancement in every way to each merry wanderer, and was in truth The Declaration of Independence for the Actor for all time.

The Original Eight.

IX.

IT was Sunday afternoon, early in June, Nineteen Hundred, when eight Vaudeville players assembled in the cafe of the Parker House, Broadway, New York City. They were David Craig, Montgomery, Fred Stone, Sam Morton, Thomas Lewis, Sam J. Ryan, Mark Murphy, Charles Mason, and the Dromio. James F. Dolan, the Gipsy, was out of town, and could not get to the meeting except in spirit; but as Charles Mason did not attend the second meeting, Dolan was acclaimed as one of the original eight when they next foregathered.

At the first meeting, after some preliminary talk, they adjourned to David Montgomery's suite of rooms, upstairs, in the Parker House, where they all took off their coats and smoked and listened, while Dromio preached to them for two hours on the advisability of a society, composed, at first, of the leading Vaudeville Artists of America. He pictured to them all the possibilities that were within his power of expression to explain. He showed them

THE ORIGINAL EIGHT
Jas. F. Dolan.
David Montgomery.
Tom Lewis
Geo. Fuller Golden
Founder.
Sam. J. Ryan.
Sam Morton.
Fred Stone.
Mark Murphy.
THE WHITE RATS.

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how they could own themselves and forever be protected from the menace of syndicated capital. He dwelt on the great good it was possible for them to do for their profession. Everybody present became enthusiastic over the idea, and each member offered many good suggestions, all of which were noted and remembered, and eventually put into execution. It was agreed among them that in order to be sure of their ground, the Society should at first be limited to One Hundred members, and that the first One Hundred candidates should be selected with a view to their character and standing in the profession, and their general availability. Therefore, when one objection was offered against a proposed candidate, he was slated for the second hundred. This plan had the effect of bringing together at first those members of the profession who were thought to be most worthy in every way. At the first meeting Dromio referred to the "Water Rats of London," and told how they had come to his rescue, and so the word "Rats," which when spelled backwards, spells "Star," seem to stick; and, as there was some joking about Mark Murphy's snow white hair, they called themselves The White Rats. They chose this title for other reasons as well. The title was afterwards thought by many to have been a mistake, but there was no time for splitting hairs over words during those early meetings. They thought they had things of more importance than titles to consider. Their

welfare seemed to be threatened. Their profession seemed to be at stake. So everybody was thinking, and thinking hard, and once again, "What's in a name?" So Dromio taught them the Song of the Water Rats, which was a chorus of a few lines, called "The Emblem," written by Wal Pink. They merely substituted the word White for Water.

"And this is the emblem of our society,
Each member acts with the greatest propriety,
Jolly old sports, to us they raise their hats!
A merry lot of fellows are The Real White Rats.
Rats! Rats! Rats! R A T S. Rats! Star!"

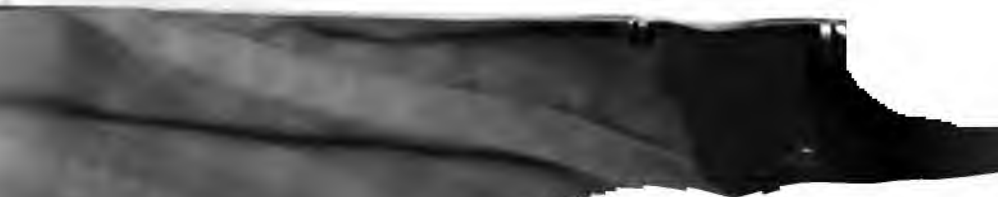
This they sang over and over again with great enthusiasm, and, in truth, though such songs are meaningless to the outsider, every syllable seems charged with a world of meaning to the singer. The same is true perhaps in a certain degree of all anthems, emblems, and most college yells. So the eight original White Rats sang this song over and over, and after vowing eternal allegiance to each other, they parted, like so many merry boys, enthusiastic and joyful, with high hopes for the future of their enterprise. When Dromio reached home that evening, he said to The Little Gold Lady, "Well, sweetheart, I have done it, at last." "What is that, Dromio?" said she. "Why, I have hitched my dream horses to their earthly cause, and there are seven comrades to go

driving with me over the hills and far away. I have blown the bubble out of my little pipe. Bring Babs here, till I tell her all about it. She likes bubbles, the same as I. They are full of such pretty colors for the eye!"

He then picked up his little girl and kissed her and said, "If what I did to-day goes through, dear, they'll remember your Daddy when you're a great big girl." Just then the door bell rang. Dromio answered it himself, and there stood Mantwa. It had been six years since he had presented himself to the Fool, and now he stands in the doorway on the very day that Dromio had opened the door of his dream. They had parted sorely, each obstinate concerning his own opinion. Dromio, insistent on following his Will-o-Wisp; Mantwa, disgusted with him for what he considered disloyalty to his higher self. And now, just as he is beginning to see light, here stands Mantwa, the Cloud. The meeting was cordial enough to preserve the amenities.

"Hello!" said Dromio. "What are you doing here? Come on in, the folks will be surprised to see you. We have discussed you much since those old days in England."

When Mantwa had met The Little Gold Lady and the Baby, and they had talked awhile of old times in England, Mantwa explained that he had come over on business; had just arrived, and only heard within the last hour, accidently in a cafe, of the in-



ception of a new organization. "You got it quick," said Dromio, "and have come to dissuade me from it, I suppose?" "Your supposition is correct," said Mantwa; "that is just what I am here for." The same old cynical smile played about his lips, as he continued.

"I have come to save you from yourself; you are making the greatest mistake of your life. Of course, I have heard all about your success over here, and you perhaps lay great stress upon it, but let me tell you, it has only just commenced; your career has only just begun; and now that you have a chance to make something of yourself, you are about to fling your chances all away; you are about to blow into oblivion the only chance that you have ever had. I'll wager that in a few months' time you will be the laughing stock of New York, if you continue in this foolish enterprise."

"Well," said Dromio, "you cannot change me from my course. I have started, and I am going through with it, come what may. Come, let's talk of something else. I cannot make you understand, and you cannot convince me that I am wrong."

"There is nothing else worth talking about," said Mantwa, and his voice took on a softer tone. "Come, Dromio," said he, "you are my foolheart, I am your brains. You admit that I have taught you many things—let me at least teach you self-preservation. Listen to reason. These people will make a lot of

noise for a little while, and if you make some little stir, the powers you are warring against will begin to use their money and influence to turn these people you are fighting for against you, and, no matter how strong and true you may be, they will libel you and ridicule you into your grave."

"You don't know them, Mantwa," said the Fool. "Your knowledge of them is confined to cafes and clubs, where they are as cunningly masked as when on the stage. I know their lives—the real undercurrent of their lives. I know their hearts, their struggles, and some of the things with which they have to contend, and in some respects they are the greatest people that I have ever known. So come, let's talk of other things, for, as I tell you, I am obdurate in this thing, and I am going through with it. Have a glass of wine."

After some more talk Mantwa left his address and departed. Dromio went to his room, threw himself upon his bed, weary almost to exhaustion. The Little Gold Lady sat down on the bed and soothed him to sleep.

At the second meeting of the new society there were sixteen members present, so they elected officers, Dromio was chosen President, or Big Chief; David Craig Montgomery, Vice President, or Little Chief; James J. Morton, Secretary, or Scrat; Mark Murphy, Treasurer, or Treasurrat. The other officers were Sam Morton, Tom Lewis, Fred Stone, James

tended to underestimate it, the Wines and their girlies laughed over their lobsters and wine, and the sporting theatrical world of Broadway at first generally treated it as a joke.

This was all as it should be, and naturally to be expected, as its appeal was made directly and solely to the Artists of Vaudeville: to those who "deliver the goods," so to speak; to those that the public pays its money to see, to enjoy, and whose services are therefore indispensable in the amusement world. These people are not manufactured by press agents in a night. Their lives are spent in learning how to entertain the public. They are known as the Standard Acts of Vaudeville, and are not to be classed or confused with Salome dancers, couchee-wigglers, and other lures that middlemen discover to gull the public. They are what might be called the staple goods of the amusement world. They have learned their business, and have become successful. Oftentimes, after many years of obscurity, wherein they continued to grind out the laugh-essence and heart-interest for the amusement of audiences, who accepted them as a matter of course. They are the people who *belong* on the stage, and who came there because they had something to give. Usually, they are versatile. They can sing, dance, mimic and act. Yes, they can act. Whenever they appear in so-called legitimate productions, they immediately become famous, and carry all before them, and in a

short time their Vaudeville origin is almost forgotten. So, the first members of the White Rats were these standard acts of Vaudeville; the class that gives the legitimate stage its greatest and most versatile stars. Still, they were Vaudevillains then, and the possibility of any organization among them tending towards their uplift and protection was considered foolish in the extreme. The little society published a prospectus setting forth their aims and ideals. This was rather an incongruous pamphlet, considering their status, as it contained such foolish phrases as Brotherly Love, Higher Ideals, Evolution, Freedom, Representation in Congress, and projected some minor reforms, such as protection of original material, and the abolition of commissions on salaries. It promised a higher form of entertainment, and a general advancement in this sphere of theatricals which could only be secured by collective effort.

Of course, this pamphlet was unmercifully guyed by the subsidized portion of the theatrical press; and in truth the language of this pamphlet was somewhat efflorescent and highfalutin', to emanate from a class which is generally referred to in the slang terms of Broadway. And in this respect, perhaps, it merited the ridicule that was heaped upon it.

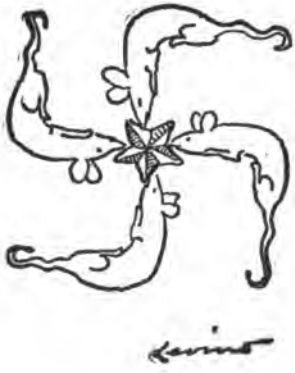
But there was our modern Don Quixote, still tilting at his Windmills, and using large-sounding phrases. He knew what he wanted, forsooth, odds

bodkins, what, ho, by Pilady, and what he wanted was Freedom and Advancement, Enlightenment, Fairness, Kindness; but there he was, asking for it, in a redundant, opulent verbiage, that, perhaps, recalled to the reader the thunderous trifles of Tody Hamilton's advance posters of Barnum and Bailey's Circus.

Once more, "What fools these mortals be!"

However, what the wiseacres could not understand, was the seeming paradox of why Variety should be Unified.

Meanwhile, the society thrived.



"For I have come to prophesy
The morrow's golden dawn"

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impress the players of it as well as the candidates who were being initiated. He himself was not fond of Rituals or ceremonies of any kind, but this little playlet was necessary. It appealed to them as wanderers, who coined their hearts into laughter and song, to be loyal to each other. It asked them to ponder, to look up, to think of the higher ideals of life, of the sweet things; the good things; the sane things. It asked them to help one another, and to be true. It told them that they were a Wandering Nation of Joy Givers, with great differences in their abilities, and that they had only themselves to depend upon, but that they would all be together in the end. It had in it quotations from the Seers; it was filled with sweet songs of long ago; of home; the scent of old-fashioned roses, and the glory of the stars. There was no frivolity or practical joking. The stranger was found alone on the desert of doubt, wrapped up in himself and his own interests, and it opened up to him a New Kingdom: the kingdom of Brotherly Love among the members of his own Nomadic Tribe; and it opened his heart to his fellows amid grand organ effects and welcoming song, with at first fifty, and afterwards many hundred, voices in harmony. And, oh! how they played themselves —these mountebanks in those days! How they sang and acted! And how, inspired by each other's sincerity and simplicity, their voices unconsciously took on the inflection of little children! And surely when

approach the newly made Brother, and, offering his hand, say: "Come, Brother, let's be friends. Here it is 'One for All and All for One.' "

And there have been dramatic silences, when the newly-made Brother has trembled for a moment in the balance, and finally broken down, or, rather, finally risen, to the occasion; and, taking the proffered hand in his own, has repeated, in a quavering voice, "One for All and All for One."

This always brought the lumps into the throats of the onlookers, but they gulped them down with cheers; and it is a question whether the members of any other class could be so affected by simple sentiment and song.

Surely, these mountebanks remain boys forever.

Though the membership of the Order numbered less than One Hundred when they moved to their new meeting place on Twenty-third Street, it soon doubled in numbers, and hundreds were clamoring for admission. The policy of selection which they pursued attracted the entire profession. After the Ritual came the Constitution, By-laws, and Rules of Order. The membership already comprised most of the best acts in Vaudeville, and, incidentally, it may be said, many of the best fellows. Their new meeting place was a regular Fraternal Hall, where other societies held their meetings on different days of the week. It was above Koster & Bial's first Music Hall on Twenty-third Street, between Broad-

way and Sixth Avenue. It was oblong in shape, with a stage at the end, on the right side of which was a grand organ. To the left there was a partition, with about five feet of space behind it, which ran the length of the hall. There was a chair in the centre of the platform. In front of the chair was a dais, where the Chief presided. On each side of him on the platform sat the officers, which, including the Dromio and the other Seven First Members, were: David C. Montgomery, Fred Stone, Sam Ryan, Tom Lewis, Sam Morton, Mark Murphy, and James F. Dolan (those were the original eight). The other officers were Chas. T. Aldrich, James J. Morton, Nat M. Wills, Ed. M. Favor, Harry Linton, Chas. McDonald, and Ralph Post. Besides these, an old minute book makes record of the following names attendant at some of these early meetings: George Munroe, Hugh Mack. George Felix, Junie McCree, George Delmore, Milton Royle, James Richmond Glenroy, Jerry Cohan, George M. Cohan, Harry O. Hayes, Tom Nawn, Tim Cronin, James J. Corbett, A. O. Duncan, Jess Dandy, James Harrigan, Walter Leroy, Colie Lorella, Richard, Staley, Frank D. Bryan, Charles Arno, George Ramsey, George Evans, Tim McMahon, James Cook, Nat Haines, Marty Healy, Fred Helf, Frank Herbert, Harry Lukins, John W. World, Bobby Gaylor, Chas. Sabine, Joe Maddern, Fred Wayne, Harry Watson,

George B. Reno, Frank Richards, Bobby Mack, Ernest Tenny, William Hines, George Lavender, Pete McCloud, Harry and John Dillon, George W. Day, Major Doyle, James Donavan, Eugene Ellsworth, Harry Foy, Alf Grant, Mark Caron, Juan Caidedo, Fred Niblo, Wm. Keough, Edward Keough, M. J. Sullivan, John Rixford, Connie Rixford, John Conroy, Lew Flatt, Joe Birnes, Fred Mardo, Frank Gardiner, Will Hickey, Stuart Kollins, Frank O'Brien, Jack Ashby, Dan Crimmins, Raymond Finlay, Paul Barnes, Wm. H. Colby, Si Hassan Ben Ali, Chas. Falke, Arthur Brock, James F. Casey, Will H. Fox, Henri H. French, Dave Genaro, Fred Bailey, Edwin Garvie, Will F. Denny, Stuart Barnes, Sam Curtis, John P. Curran, Chas. Case, Ward Caufield, Mike Coakley, Bernard Dyllyn, Phil Dorreto, Arthur Don, Hugh Dougherty, Chas. De Camo, Robert Dailey, Joe Doner, Jos. J. Dowling, Wm. Everhart, Frank Evans, Chas. T. Ellis, Edward Esmonde, Harry Foy, Joe Flynn, Mart M. Fuller, Alf Grant, Dan Gracey, John D. Gilbert, Jack Gardiner, Knox Gavin, Gerald Griffin, Eddie Gerard, Nat C. Haines, Herbert Holcombe, Mark Hart, Lew Hawkins, Chas. Harris, Fred Herbert, Frank Hayes, Harry Hedrix, John P. Hill, Arthur Hill, John Jess, Stuart Kollins, Arthur Kherns, Chas. Kilpatrick, Kara, John Kernell, John King, Ed. Latell, Billy Link, Bert Leslie, John Le Clair, Dolph Levino, Al Maddox, Harry Montgomery,

Chas. Mack, Leon Morris, Frank Morrell, Maximilian, Wm. H. McCart, James McDonald, Eugene O'Rourke, Joe Pettingill, Paul Quinn, Wm. Robyns, Arthur Rigby, John Russell, Pat Rooney, Julian Rose, Peter Randall, Thomas Ryan, Al Stinson, Mark Sullivan, Chas. Stine, Lew Sully, Chas. Seamon, Wm. Seeley, Walter Stanton, George Sydney, George Marion, Edward Tenny, George Thatcher, James Tenbrook, Walter Talbot, Jack Tucker, J. K. Tobin, Will Vidocq, Billy Van, Joe Wilton, Chas. Wayne, J. Royer West, Al Wilson, Al Weston, Frank Ward, Jack Wilson, Ed Wrothe, Gus Williams, Frank White, George Waterbury, James Wall, Odell Williams, Clayton White, and Wm. H. Zeno.

As many of the above gentlemen are still with us, it is perhaps sensible and in good taste not to wax too eulogistic over them while they are still here. And, in truth, if the good actions of each member who gave his time and service for the cause were to be written, it would require many volumes to chronicle them. Suffice now to mention that they were all in earnest and did all in their power to build up the Order which is now their protection and their pride.

Early Trials.

XI.

THE first two members that circumstances subjected to the acid test were Montgomery and Stone. These young men had become very popular among Vaudeville patrons in all the principal cities, and they were engaged for a season as the star attraction of a company that was booked in all the syndicate houses. The manager of the company, the late Mr. Louis Erick, who, by the way, was a fine fellow at heart, had been at great expense in getting out original pictorial printing for them—several styles of lithographic three sheets, etc. They were to be boomed extensively. The company was one of the best on the road, and their salary was to be the largest they had yet received. It was June. The company was to open in September, and they were offered an engagement of one week at Koster & Bial's 34th Street Music Hall, which was an Independent house, whose manager, Mr. Hashim, did not belong to the syndicate. And though their engagement with Mr. Erick was not to commence until

thing that meant so much to them at that time they blew like a bubble into eternity when it came to be weighed against their words of honor which they had given to their comrades for their comrades' cause. Then Tom Lewis and Sam J. Ryan did the same thing, and from that day not one of these men have looked back, and surely they deserve the success they are now enjoying; but it was the precedent they set which was the great thing at the time. It had a great effect, and nearly anyone of the first few hundred members would have gone through perdition to have kept his word with his fellows while these examples were fresh in their minds.

They are truly fortunate who draw the prize of courage in the lottery of life. It is great indeed to be a Nathan Hale amid the affairs of Earth's great Arena; but on the little mimic stage of glamour, gauze and glitter, it is not so bad to be either a David Craig Montgomery, a Frederick Stone, a Sam J. Ryan, or Tom Lewis. Sam Morton and his clever family also stood pat and Jim the Gipsy and Mark Murphy were dateless for many moons.

Sacrifices of a like nature were afterwards made by many members of the society, before and after the crisis. It would be repetition to dwell upon them, and mention is made of the action of these particular Brothers, not for the sake of lauding them with any special praise, but because they were the first to encounter a trial of this nature.

haranguing the mobs, pleading with eligible candidates to join the fold, and explaining things over and over again. He was very proud of the personnel of the Order at this time, though until now none of the big legitimate stars, who afterwards came in, had joined. Still, they had most of the best artists in Vaudeville.

There they sat, each Sunday, like good boys at school, with bright faces, keenly interested, each with his own idea for the benefit of the Cause; all with their white collars on. It was good to see them. And the greater they were in their profession, the more simple and natural were they in their manner. There were among them famous funmakers, whom the Dromio had admired and enjoyed when a boy in the gallery, and younger men, now become celebrated, with whom he had struggled in the early days.

Old partners and old friends, all joined together in one band! Surely, he felt proud.

Still, "There is a crack in everything that God has made," said Emerson, and so it befell that just as our Fool's heart was filling with gratitude for this brief glimpse of what might one day be his dream fulfilled, he meets Mantwa, and enthusiastically describes to him one of these meetings.

He tells him of the thrill it gives him to look out into their sincere faces. There was a note of pity in Mantwa's voice as he said:

"Ah! thou poor dreaming Fool of a Dromio! If the sight of them thrills thee, look well upon them now, while the novelty and the mystery of their present mood is with them, for they are as fickle as you are fond. Feed your eyes and heart with them now while this tranquil atmosphere prevails. If you knew humanity as I do; if you could only see a little ahead of you, you would be giving your gavel to the nearest member, and, walking away from them forever, saying, 'Thank God, I've done!' Are they gushing over you yet? No. Well, they will be, and that very soon. It is one of their characteristics. It is the second spasm of the farce. They will praise you, and damn you, and you will be roasted to a crisp."

He would have continued in this strain had not Dromio left him abruptly in disgust, and for consolation sought out Jim the Gipsy, who always encouraged everybody, and whose very presence suggested Hope and smiling skies.

The Booking Offices.

XII.

IN the Autumn of the same year, 1900, The White Rats of America established their booking office on 34th Street, in the Savoy Theatre Building, for the purpose of securing engagements for their members at the Independent Theatres. This was their first business move, and it aroused the wrath of the mighty. They charged their members five per cent. commission on their salaries, and these moneys went into the Fraternal Fund.

Dromio tried to persuade them to accept shares in an investment fund, in return for this five per cent., said investment fund to be used to purchase theatrical enterprises, especially theatres. By this method each member would become a shareholder in whatever theatres they might secure in proportion to the amount he would pay into his own account for booking purposes.

He thought that, by this method, the members would eventually acquire a deeper interest in the business plans of the Order, as by gradually and

dream of an interest in his booth! * * * Why, this was madness! Besides, there were still many fearsome ones—or, let us say, conservatives—who persisted that the Order should be purely a social one. On the other hand, the enthusiasm of some members over the booking offices was so great that the higher salaried artists said: "Let the commissions all go into the general fund of the Order, so that the smaller salaried acts will receive the benefit of their more highly remunerated Brothers." This was generous, but it thwarted for a while the plans laid out for the purpose of securing theatres.

However, the booking offices were established, and some of the members were booked in the few Independent Houses then in existence. All contracts were executed by the Fraternal Secretary, Frank Lalor, and his assistant, Mart M. Fuller.

It was about this time that Digby Bell, who was then playing in Vaudeville, joined the society, and it was most probably Milton Royle who interested him and induced him to join. Milton Royle had an appropriate name. As a man he was both royal and loyal. He was one of the earliest members, and most earnest and intelligent of workers for the cause; and, though he and his talented wife had for years been successful as players and writers in both Drama and Vaudeville, he had at that time not yet written the great successes he is now known by in America and England. Royal

and Bell were both members of the Lambs' Club, and as soon as Bell joined the society he was the means of bringing into the fold several members whose prominence begot an interest in the Order that had not previously been manifested by either the press or public. Brother Bell proposed Henry E. Dixey. When Dixey was made a member he brought in De Wolf Hopper and the late Maurice Barrymore, who, in their turn, were the means of making members of Nat C. Goodwin, David Warfield, John T. Kelly, the late Peter F. Dailey, Dan Daly, Joe Weber, Lew Fields, Andrew Mack, Joseph Coyne, Eddie Foy, Otis Harlan, Sam Bernard, Happy Ward, Oliver Doud Byron, Joseph Murphy, George Marion, and many others. This influx of successful names made the managers sit up and take notice. Perhaps, after all, something might be doing. They became very restive, indeed. The press became interested. This was what the Dromio wanted. He knew if he could get the issue fairly before the public, through the columns of the daily papers, it would help greatly, in the case of any possible crisis. He appointed Paul Armstrong, who has since become the celebrated playwright, as press representative, and soon the papers were teeming with conjectures and predictions of the possible coming merry war.

And now the Society was flourishing indeed. It is generally supposed that an affected dignity and

aloofness from your erstwhile fellows are two principle characteristics of the successful Theatrical Star. Yet it would seem that these big names of the merry world deserved the success which their talents brought them, as they proved by this move that they were capable of holding truth and justice above this false dignity; and, in truth, with no possible motive to lure them, they not only lent their names, but gave their time and money, and exerted their best efforts for the cause of their struggling Vaudeville Brothers. Perhaps some time in their lives some of them had heard a note of the Nightingale's Song. Who shall say?

When Digby Bell, whose success during all his career had been gained in the highest priced theatres, joined, he said to the Dromio: "I am amazed —positively amazed. I did not believe this possible. I will do everything that lies in my power for the cause of this Society." And he kept his word. De Wolf Hopper, after his initation, made an appropriate speech, telling how grateful he was to be among them; and, during the recess called Liberty Hall, he took the Dromio aside in a brotherly, and not a patronizing way, and asked him to always call him by his first name, which is Will; and from that moment Mr. Hopper gave his time and money, and worked with diligence to further the aims of the Fraternity.

The same was true of Henry E. Dixey, one of

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tans of the theatres, who lay such great stress on an affected dignity; who, having less than mediocre talents, must needs have an author fit parts to them as a tailor fits their clothes; who prate of AHT with a very broad A; who are, in no real sense, educated, and who, yet, ye gods, gibber of Cultyah!

Well, perhaps, they, too, serve a purpose, if only to present a contrast to men.

It may not be out of place to observe, in passing, that while applause in all its forms is the very life breath of stage people, there is nothing of which they are so fearsome as censure, especially if it comes in the form of ridicule; and the fact that the above-mentioned gentlemen braved the ridicule of their artistocratic club associates, and the *jeunesse dorée* in general, speaks well for their manhood and fearless intelligence. Not that they deserve more credit than hundreds of other less known members, but that they were more prominent, and lent their efforts to an enterprise that was not formed particularly for their class, and assisted their professional brethren merely through sympathy and sentiment and a love of fair play. And that their association was very valuable was partly owing to the fact that their names were attractive for publicity purposes, and publicity was what the organization needed in those days, in order to get its aims and ideals fairly before the public. And in no single instance did any of the above gentlemen leave the Society in bad

week open, and they will all meet together and hold an All-Star Carnival in Madison Square Garden. They will be at least One Thousand strong by that time, and everybody will take part. Eminent Actors will be Ring Masters and Clowns. Every great act known to the show world will be there. It will be the first gala week in their history. The receipts will go to theatrical charities. But this is the point: They will all be together for once, and New York will know they are in town.

Yes, things are really getting warm. As soon as the news of this contemplated Carnival was made known to the managers, reports came back on wings to the Society that the managers would flood the country with foreign talent during the following season, and that all members of the Fraternity whom it was possible to boycott or blacklist would suffer. Practically, no bookings had thus far been arranged for the coming season. The managers were perfecting their organization, still offering reduced salaries (which scarcely anybody accepted); still hoping for something to happen inside of the Order to disrupt it. And as this hoped-for disruption did not occur, divers plans were resorted to to bring it about. Emissaries were dispatched to Europe to engage acts. Rumor had it that they were to secure all the foreign talent available. Also, this gossipping dame, Rumor, said that amateurs, and all sorts of aspirants for stage careers were being tried out

Order had been an agreeable fellow, who would have listened to managerial reasons, the Society would have been made to order—for the managers. Their press representatives wrote articles telling how he had hypnotized the whole profession, and aspired to own all the theatres himself. These ebulitions made the Dromio smile.

Meanwhile, he borrowed money from his friends, chiefly from Claude Bartram, who was then in Germany, and who sent it by cable, to keep The Little Gold Lady and the wee bairn in food and raiment. This was necessary, as he gave all his time to the Society, and would accept no remuneration whatsoever. And though fools may live on enthusiasm, it is a physical fact that their loved ones may not, unless, indeed, they also be in the midst of the strife, and buoyed up by that mysterious unknown ether that fills the dreamer's soul to the exclusion of all other desires. Although such was the case with The Little Gold Lady, still there was the wee bairn. The Little Gold Lady's time was taken up in administering to the wants of the Fool, soothing his tired nerves, and keeping him at least semi-sane, so that he was allowed to roam abroad and pursue his devilish machinations against the Holy Power of Trusts and Sacred Syndicated Greed.

XIII.

SO the work goes on. Meanwhile, the Fool continues to meet Mantwa, here, there, and everywhere; on the streets, at the clubs and cafes.

One day, as they were walking up Fifth Avenue together, observing the medley of architecture on that thoroughfare of riotous conceptions, Mantwa said:

"The structures on this street remind me of your foolish Fraternity. Look at these mansions and houses. Study their styles. They are Greek, Gothic, early Roman, Byzantine, Old English, Colonial, Dutch, Modern, and what not—some of them a medley of all. Surely, here is Variety. In order to blend them into harmonious proportions, you would first have to destroy them. And so with the members of your band of Yugendspeil, who are as greatly diversified and contrasted in their personalities and the inner workings thereof—nay, even in the outward expression, forsooth, as are the styles

of these structures; and, like the master inhabitant of each of these, so the inner spirit of each of your members whispers to himself: 'Well, if I am not It among this bunch, I am at least somewhat different.' And also, like unto these, does each member of your band make his front for show purposes. Only in a different way. How absurd it would seem to you if someone said that all the dwellers on this avenue could be taught to believe in the same idea."

"They do believe in the same idea," said the Dromio. "They believe in gold. Each may pretend to believe in something else, but they are all one as regards the god they worship, which same is Mammon. Yellow, glittering gold. And yet these men with their surplus millions know that in this same city there are thousands of human beings starving for a crust."

"Surely," laughed Mantwa, "you do not believe that all men were born free and equal, do you? Surely, you do not believe that a Russian serf is as free and equal as an American, for instance, who is the outcome of seven generation of thinkers, do you?"

"I shall answer your first question first," said Dromio. "I do not KNOW that all men were born free and equal, but I do KNOW that they should all have an equal chance. I do not believe that a Russian serf is the intellectual equal of a thinker, and the reason why he is not is on account of centuries of oppres-

worship. That is it. They *pretend;* and that is man, *pretense.* All men are pretenders. And this pretense is a wonderful thing. It helps to make the comedy interesting. But what is most ludicrous, they all pretend to believe each other's pretendings. Of course, there are exceptions; those who have faith in legends and dreams. But you know what nature does to exceptions. And, as with other men, so with your fellows: they also are pretenders, on and off the stage; they don't believe in anything; they don't even believe in themselves. Most of them would rather be some one else. That is one of the reasons why they take to the stage. Deception is part of their life. And they will pretend and pretend, and you can do nothing with pretense. You can accomplish their advance only by simple faith, and faith is impossible with them. When they are not inwardly winking, they are in doubt. If your Society, during these days of enthusiasm, they may all think that they mean to be loyal. That is the way we are constituted; but, as Brutus says, 'when they should endure the bloody spur, then fall their crests, and, like deceitful jades, sink in the trial.' "

"I notice," said the Dromio, "that, notwithstanding your cynicism, you seem to admit that these fellows of mine are not unlike the rest of mankind?"

"Of course, I admit that," replied Mantwa, "and more; they emphasize mankind. Their very busi-

rest of the people. They are the epitome of the public, and therefore more difficult to handle. And often they give the public its cue for all sorts of crazy innovations as regards dress and vernacular. They know the pulse of Momus, and in catering to the general, they set the pace for the frivolous."

"Then you admit that they have at least an indirect influence on certain classes?" said Dromio.

"Yes."

"Well, if you could conceive of some scheme, or dream, or plan, to enfranchise any one class, or even one man, from a state of moral and mental torpor, would you not try it?"

Mantwa shrugged his shoulders: "I suppose so, if I believed it possible."

"Well, then, listen," said the Fool. "It is a comparatively insignificant matter whether my people win or lose during my life, or what they may do to me, so long as a Fraternity can be *perpetuated* among them, so that they will eventually, as a profession, merit the respect of the world. It is like marching an army from darkness into light. It is the same as founding a wandering nation, and it can be done with a few precepts: Look up! Be brave! Love each other! Own yourself, your Art, and all its enterprises! It matters not how contrasted their personalities may be; all men are contrasts, more or less. The souls of some are the cul-

mination of thousands of years of civilization, while others have just clambered down from the trees. It is certain that we all did not start manward at the same time. While some were still in the protoplasm stage, others, who had started thousands of years before, were taming the behemoth and building temples. We are the descendants of both the old and the new, the experienced and the nescient ones, and that is why it is difficult to understand each other. Hence, the myriad ententied tragi-comedy of life. As we started millions of years apart, we are still millions of years from each other. And as we all wear the same guise of bipeds now, no man knows another's handicap in the long race through the corridors of time, and therefore no man should judge his fellow. But here is my point: We are all unconscious absorbers of each other's worth. The lesser must profit by contact with the greater, even as light dispels darkness. And all the light that has come to men has been shed through the spirit of Fraternity. All the religions of the world are founded on it. It matters little whether they kill the leader, and serve him as a feast to the enemy or to the gods; so long as the idea for their uplift can be *perpetuated,* others will come and find his pebbles to be pearls. Such is the value of an idea. It matters little if all the present enthusiasts of the earth were to give their lives for their convictions, so long as the idea is perpetuated their followers will one day become

a week at one of the Independent Halls. I
wife, who had been paralyzed for years, a
side he never left, except to come to the
ance. Then came a sketch team (a r
woman). "How do you like them?" said
mio, when they had concluded their farc
went big.

"Oh! they will pass muster," said Mantwa
can act, and they both seem to enjoy what
doing."

"Well," said the Dromio, "both their h
breaking, and I know it. They have stru
their lives together, and every dollar they h
able to save has been spent in trying to save
of their only boy."

And so on through the whole prograr
Dromio continued to lift the curtain on the
and sacrifices of his fellows in The Merry
of Make Believe. When they came out of t
tre, Dromio said:

"Those are a few of our pretenders." '
said good night, leaving Mantwa ponderin

nities (Follyland not excepted) that any fellow member may speak, even though he favors the Opposition; even though he wards off every stroke made for their welfare, and turns the very currents of their rivers of life towards the shores where the enemy is armed and waiting. And though one may suspect them, until positive proof is at hand, one may suspect and suspect. Nay, though you see hell gleaming in a fiend's eyes, until you can prove it to those who see it not, you may guess and guess, and doubt, and then you may lie down and dream. For are they not Brothers in disguise? And have they not words and insidious inferences to make skeptical the faithful and cajole the weak? We are all Brothers, forsooth, but, alas! there is no Siamese ligament joining us to prove it. We are all still some aeons apart, and it is appalling to consider how few have led all the millions of nonentities through the centuries of night toward the dawn. However, what will be, will be.

In the Society a Board of Directors has been formed and a Board of Electors. Also, a Star Cabinet, mostly composed (for business purposes) of members best known to the public, yet not without a due regard for integrity. A proposition has been carried that all members will refuse to sign for the coming season any contracts containing the five per cent. commission clause. In negotiations, they will

him, and each supposed, by certain philosophers, to be guided by a soul pilot, all of which same are to be tried out during the coming hours when the sifting process begins, when they will ascertain which are the sheep and which the goats, or which the lions and the wolves, or any similie you wish.

Therefore, let us take one more brief glimpse at them while they are still happy, for it is problematical whether we shall ever see their like again joined together in one band. Not unless the Dromio's dream comes true and man's faith in his brother man is born of his own desire to be of use to him.

There is nearly a thousand of them in and out of town. In other cities, all over the United States, the travelling members, those who were playing engagements on the road, hold what they call scampers, or social meetings—at least in every city where a quorum of Brothers can be got together, and at some of those there are scores present; hence, wine and talk flow freely. Reports of each are forwarded to the Lodge and read at every meeting. If any student of sociology could have taken a casual glance at one of those home meetings at this time, he would have been amazed if told that they even pretended to harmonize. Especially if he had a foreknowledge of the temperament of stage people. They were from nearly every walk of life, and from every groove of the show world. Actors who had played

shore, ground by the waves of time, from all the crumbling rocks of life's wonderful ocean. The emphasized epitome of all society; reflecting the manners of all. From those who would give their lives for a sentiment, to those whom neither experience, plan, precept, or example, could rouse to listen to anything but the voice of ridicule. If man is to be modified by society, surely here is a test. Men, who were thought to be wits, because they phrased the thoughts of their betters in slang; and angels, who paid them homage, because they knew neither their own worth nor the methods of Charlatantry. Life is what you read into it with your own soul, and there were those among them who read the spirit of their fraternity so clearly that they felt the heavens lifting them to higher things, and of their "dead selves" making "stepping stones," and they were shoulder to shoulder with those who, hearing only noise and confusion, guessed it was some huge joke, and formed cliques, and gave them names, which parodied the name of their Order. There were circus performers who were seers without words, and wordy men without a thought. There were frivolous tragedians, serious comedians, solemn clowns. The world-wide and self-centred. All the lights, tints and shades of life's phantasmagoria, emphasized by fate, for the purpose of reflecting back to semi-civilized man his follies and foibles; and now, though still as far apart as the stars from each other, all in one system, for the first understanding in Follyland.

good man. And the Dromio would also have told you of that boy—that mere boy—who, before he was eighteen, had all the world singing his songs; who sang and danced with his sister, acted with his father and mother, played the violin himself. Who, in his early twenties, had made his whole family famous and rich, and himself a millionaire; who gave his money to beggars in secret, and blushed to find it fame. Who presented his old-time friends with fortunes of many thousands of dollars at a time when they were in need, and secretly arranged so that others of his afflicted fellows should have incomes for life. Who organized worthy charities and institutions for newsboys and waifs, and who, when rich and famous, sold papers on the street at $100 apiece for those in distress. Who, as a boy, wrote all the best sketches and songs in Vaudeville and many musical plays. Who created innovations in playwriting; who drew characters as he saw them in life, then engaged the very originals and let them play themselves; who wrote the book, music, lyrics, designed the costumes, taught the chorus, staged and directed everyone of his own creations, and whose career has only just begun.

Not always is genius combined with that true greatness of heart, called sympathy. However, it is certain that he never forgot a friend or bothered to remember an enemy. In future years his career will read something like a modern fairy tale. So

Samaritan. When anyone was ill or in need, always the cry was, "Appoint Hugh Mack as a committee of one! He will investigate." And it was Hugh himself who was always searching for those cases of distress, and always caring for them. Hugh Mack is a simple fellow, and plain, but he has that greater wisdom, the wisdom of the heart.

There was Junie McCree, artist to his finger tips, and greater as a man than artist. He would have made a success in any other profession as well as this. Brains are in his head, and wit upon his lips. He is the principal star of a coterie whose business it is to keep the Order laughing; some, with quip and quirp of repartee; some, with slang, fly, up-to-date gibberage, understood only in Follyland, and others with mere clowning. But Junie's humor, like his characters and caricatures, is artistic.

Colie Lorella was a good committee worker, and a fighter from 'way back, very decided in his convictions, quick tempered, and of expression most intense. His language was of the vernacular persuasion, and at times quite picturesque. An anecdote will best explain him. He hated any kind of sham, hypocrisy or sophistry, or double dealing, and one day he was telling the Chief his opinion of certain members whose duplicity he suspected, and he did not mince his words. The Chief was in the habit of illustrating his points with quotations from the Masters. He would say, "as Emerson says," or "as

little Major Doyle, and that other original ferret, Ralph Post. Then there was John World, who gave his whole self to the Order at all times, and rendered great service, as did Frank Gardner, Jess Dandy, Fred Hyland, William Keough, M. J. Sullivan, John Conroy, Charles McDonald, Ramsey and Arno, The Rixford Brothers, Sam Sidman, whose good work helped the Order greatly; Lew Flatt, the Powers Brothers, Fred Mardo, the stoic philosopher; and the late Paul Dresser, who wrote sweet, homely songs that will wet the cheeks of all Americans for many years to come; also Mart M. Fuller, who, in the after dark days, always gathered a quorum together every Sunday so that the Order never missed a meeting, and who, after two years' constant fighting, carried his proposition to let the negligent members back in the fold in the form of reinstatement. Then there were Tim McMahon, with his stories always on tap, and Ren Shields, Bohemia's best clown off the stage, barring little Johnny Stanley, who ties him for fun at the Rat's Scampers; and that ever-smiling genius of mirth, Eddie Foy, who helps to keep the world so young. Some men say, "I am for my Country;" Henry George said, "I am for Men." Eddie says, "I am for the Actor."

These were the true Knights of Starland. These were the men who kept the Society's heart beating in after years, when oxygen was necessary. When,

tumbling and high kicking; and it is a fact that Cookie would rather jump over a fence when he came to it than walk through the best gate that ever swung on hinges. He was a gladsome person, this Cookie, of an exuberant, good-natured disposition, very enthusiastic, very intense, and, let it be said to his everlasting credit, he was sincere. However, when talking, he had the strangely unfortunate habit of illustrating his words with violent actions and gesticulations. This made it difficult for people to listen to him without smiling, and the more serious he became, the more laughable he appeared. He was thick-set and swingy. If he said, "Don't get chesty!" he would expand his own chest several inches, to illustrate what he meant. A product of the old Variety days—except for the fact that he chewed tobacco—his habits were temperate; though the same could not be said of his speech or actions. He was one of those many merry men who stand in groups on corners and settle all theatrical questions. With his white Melton double-breasted box coat, derby hat, tilted to one side, one glove half pulled on, and twirling his cane with the other hand. Whenever he stood still, which was seldom, he would cross one foot over the other, put his cane behind him, and sit on the handle of it. Whenever he started to talk, he began to walk up and down, and twirl his cane. When he became emphatic, he would slash the air with it, and he was always emphatic. In the So-

The Crisis.

XVI.

THE Vaudeville Managers' Association at that time had divided itself into two parts, the Eastern and the Western Branches, they were called. The Eastern Branch was comprised of the Managers of all the Vaudeville Theatres east of Chicago. The Western Branch of all the Vaudeville in the blustering western Metropolis, and of all those cities west of it, clear to Los Angeles. Report had it that there had been much strife among the proprietors of those amusement booths all over the country, not only in differences of opinion between the two Branches, but the individual members of each branch found it difficult to agree. Their troubles had been very serious at times, and many had threatened to resign; and a delegate from the Eastern to the Western Branch (who journeyed thither for the purpose of pouring oil on the troubled waters of the West), had been flatly told that the Eastern members were a bunch of chumps (or worse)

few, if any, contracts in the safe of the Society. Many reasons are given as to why they would prefer to keep their own contracts, but all swear that they have not signed a contract with a commission clause in it since the edict went forth. Some admit that they are paying commissions to the Association, but they say they were booked before it was ruled otherwise in the Order. They are not by many believed. At all events, their contracts are *not* in the safe of the Society. Preachments are made, declaring this law to be a circumscription of individual liberty. Paul Armstrong has been working hard with the press men. The issue is now fairly before the public. It is all about five per cent. commission on their salaries. (Oh! was it?) Everybody knows it is not fair to engage a person for One Hundred Dollars per week, and only pay him Ninety-five. (Ah! if this were all.) It is whispered that Mr. B. F. Keith, President of the Managers' Association, is not in favor of commissions. Still, the clause remains, and members are playing at the Keith Houses and elsewhere for the Association, and their contracts are *Not* in the safe. So another proposition goes through, that all contracts held by members for any future time, later than two weeks hence, shall be placed in the hands of the booking secretary, and cancelled. They are going to find out who is who. This also is not complied with. They would pass these propositions unanimously, and

Othello. However, it is as potent as it is untrue, and something must be done. *Something Must Be Done* to find out who is who. Scores are threatening to resign, unless this something is done. The Dromio is told so over and over again. There is a meeting of the combined Board of Directors and Electors. At this meeting certain members try to turn the whole brunt of the coming storm on a certain manager named Poli, who did *not* belong to the Syndicate. This was significant to the Dromio. Poor old Poli! What had he done? He ran a couple of insignificant theatres in New England that were sort of fill-ins: places for odd weeks for such performers as cared to occasionally play for less than their regular salaries. Poor old Poli! He had been overlooked entirely until this worked-up-to-moment, when something must be done to prevent the disruption of the Order. He could not get into the Association at that time, and though he booked through his agent, William Morris, rather than through the offices of the Fraternity, still he was nobody's enemy. However, he looms up now, when it looks like something is going to be done. The Dromio listens, but says nothing. That night emissaries are dispatched to four theatres, to be there on the afternoon of the coming morrow, but they do not go to Poli's. They go to Keith's four houses, which are in cultured Boston, sleepy Phil-

adelphia, benignant Providence, and noisy New York.

The next day, near noontime, as Mr. E. F. Albee, General Manager of B. F. Keith's Amusement Enterprises, approached that particular temple of art known as Keith's Union Square Theatre, he saw several well-known faces, the owners of which seemed to be in conference with each other and acting rather strangely. It is supposable that one of this group approached and confided unto him the ominous news that there was likely to be no performance at the Union Square that day, unless he, Mr. Albee, could, in some way, secure the services of new performers, as all those entertainers at present engaged at that particular place of amusement had suddenly been taken ill.

Also, that he, Mr. Albee, could acquire information as regards any further particulars by applying in person at the Fraternal Meeting Place of the White Rats, which same was on 23d Street, where the members of the aforesaid body were now assembled, and where they would be in session all day.

As to the precise way in which this little piece of news may have been conveyed to Mr. Albee, or how it affected him, history doth not record. But business is business; and if the Mountain will not come to Mahomet, Mahomet must go to the Mountain. At all events, it is certain that in a very short time after the reception of this information, Mr.

Albee was climbing those stairs which led to the Fraternal Hall of the Society.

It is reported to the members that he is outside. To preclude any possibility of embarrassment, the members retire—all except a committee of three: Chief Dromio and two other members. Mr. Albee is admitted. He wants to know what they want of him? It is explained that they want nothing of him. On the contrary, is there anything they can do for him? "It is reported," says he, "that your members are going on a strike this afternoon at the Union Square Theatre."

"Not so, Mr. Albee," says Chief Dromio. "Our members are worried so greatly over certain existing conditions that they are liable to fall ill, even this afternoon, and in other cities besides New York, as, for instance, Boston, Providence, and Philadelphia. But as these conditions which worry them so can be easily adjusted to suit them, they will most likely all get well at once, upon being apprised of said alteration. Nay, they will become glad and happy, and there will be exceeding rejoicing among the faithful."

"But I can do nothing." says Mr. Albee, "without the consent of the other Managers of our Association." "Then you should surely get that consent at once," he is told. He then requests that a committee of the Fraternity wait upon the Associated Managers at their offices in the St. James

sions which are rightfully ours, and agree to sign a contract which is equitable. And no matter what you may do, all your efforts to put our Fraternity out of existence will be in vain. It was conceived of long before your Association was dreamed of. It is founded on truth. It will live and grow great, and unless you alter your methods, it will consume you! You are fanning the flames yourselves! You started the trouble. We were not molesting you. Why have our members become so restless that they insist upon finding out who is loyal, even by radical methods? Who is the cause of this? Your President says he does not want the commissions. Then why do you take them? Give us some light on the subject. All we seek is simple justice and fair play. Those are the basic principles of our Brotherhood. You know what YOU are together for? For money! Nobody blames you for that, but you want it all! You aim through eliminating competition to make it impossible for any person to open a theatre in opposition to you in any city of the United States! What kind of entertainment will you give the public if you succeed? And what salaries will you pay the artists? You have already offered them much reduced salaries. The reason they have not accepted them is because of our Society. We have prevented them. We have built for ourselves a house that cannot fall. Hope stands forever on its threshold. You would send fear to visit us. Well, let

him come, and claim whomsoever he may. There will still be others, and we shall see "who is who" among us! We do not want those whom you can frighten. Come, let us be fair. You are using the commissions on our salaries to run your Association. You say you do not want them. We say we do want them. They belong to us. We are here to see what you intend to do."

Something like this was the jumble-mumble of incoherent verbiage poured forth on the hot breath of our ridiculous one. He was interrupted many times, each time threatening to leave, but was prevented by members of his own committee, who cautioned patience (which same by-play had all been prearranged by them).

Finally, having thus delivered himself of his tirade, he sits down and listens. They try to bluff, persuade, cajole him.

There are arguments pro and con. Mostly con. One of the many handicaps that our Fool labored under was his inability to see the ridiculous futility of appealing with such sentiments as truth, justice or fair play, in this present age of Iron and Gold. Neither perhaps could he see the incongruity of introducing same into his frothy world of Make Believe; or, if he could, he was powerless to alter it. Men must go the way they are made. Even fools. And though he knew that similar sentiments ex-

pressed alert great affairs in all ages had lighted other fools the way to dusty death," still, must he play his part and speak his piece, though it availeth no more than to say prayers to a lion in a jungle.

agers, it means control, power, monopoly of catering to the amusment-loving world. And managers always cater, even as the public always flies to morbidity.

Control by artists of their own enterprises means a consciousness of a freedom to give that which is best in them for the production of artistic effect, regardless of all other considerations. Theatricals have become necessary, and if the public cannot get salt for its jaded palate, it will accept art for its eyes, and even though the eyes understand not, they will learn. Hence, the benefit. So in this age of organization, it has now become a question of who shall eventually serve the public diversion. Caterers or educators? Granted, that the Merry Men as a body must first educate themselves. To do this, they must first be free; and no man can be said to be free while another man, or a syndicate of men, controls his destiny.

What further proof is wanting that stage people secure better results, and arrive at higher ideals, when untrammelled—in short, that they prefer to educate and amuse at the same time, than this fact: that the best productions are always to be found in those theatres where the actor is also manager, or at least owns his theatre?

However, here is the Fool and his committee at the Managers' offices, discussing this seemingly unimportant question (all important to the Fool) of

depends on this meeting. And as has been said, there is much noisy argument after Dromio's speech. Finally, the Managers declare that they are powerless to abolish the commisisons, until the next meeting of the two Branches of their Association, Western and Eastern, which is to be on the sixth day of March. It is now the middle of February. They "must consult with their Western members first." They promise that at that forthcoming meeting of the branches twain to have said commissions done away with entirely, and the clauses omitted from all contracts. They also promise that in the interim they will not take these commisisons. However, they will not sign an agreement to this effect, though they are pleaded with to do so. They will merely give their words. As a last resort, their words are taken, the Fool and his Committee depart, and the performance at Keith's Union Square goes on as usual. So do those other performances at Boston, Providence, and Philadelphia, for a time, and the audiences at each all wax merry and enthusiastic, little dreaming, or having much need to care, that the merry Joeys, Jesters, Jinglers and Joshers, who strut, fret and amble before them with song and story on a stage within a stage, have at least a semi-serious side to their lives, where inward and outward struggles go on forever. Or that they have but now put off for a few days a crisis the outcome of which would

determine their status on earth for all future time.

Surely, movements of great possibilities in the future are sometimes disguised as small affairs at the time of their enactment. There was that simple tax on the tea of the Colonials (another five per cent.) which gave to the earth a new world of men and women, said to be free and equal, and kingless, who now call themselves citizens, to differentiate from the word "subject," and who yet are subject to many kings under the names of Brokers, Bankers, Politicians and Monopolists.

However, our committee returns, and reports to the Lodge. The communication is received with favor. Everybody is glad that a crisis has been avoided, even for a time, so long as those members playing at the theatres named have proven loyal by their willingness to act in accordance with the will of the general body, which telephone messages and telegrams prove to be the case.

So the excitement simmers down into suspense. They will wait and see if the Managers will keep their word.

Enter Kendall.

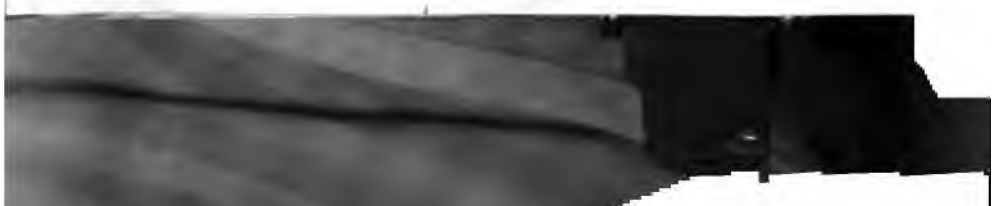
XVIII.

IT is at this time that one Ezra Kendall makes his appearance among them for the first time. In all professions, political parties, classes or clans, there is ever a man whom it seems natural for some other men to follow. Perhaps because in his person, his words and ways, he seems to combine the nearest approximation to their several ideals. But perhaps for some reason, unknown to men, will their eyes and hearts almost unconsciously turn to him in crucial hours. Such a man among Vaudevillains in those days was Ezra Kendall. From the inception of the Order, members had been saking, "Why does not Kendall join?" And the question was asked oftener as the rank and file became more numerous. Beautiful intuition of those who have no words to speak, but only hearts to feel. Intuition to be depended upon. But mostly did the Dromio wish him to be in the Fold. He wrote him letters frequently, endeavoring to ascertain his reasons for remaining outside

for the Cause, had nevertheless so much faith in him, their friend on the outside? But when Ezra joined, the Dromio understood. Referring to the managers extracting five per cent. of the artists' salaries for booking them at their own theatres, and thus paying themselves for acting as agents for themselves, Kendall said: "Why should an employer employ his employee to employ his employer?"

When, in after days, they told him that there would have been no strike if he had joined earlier, he said: "There would have been a more extensive one. It would have reached from Boston to Los Angeles."

As was to be expected, the managers did not keep their word. The Dromio felt that they would not, but he wanted to give them every chance possible. During the following week, members whose services were in demand by the Association were sent for to accept engagements. They were offered contracts with the same old commisison clauses in them. These applicants said, "We thought that there was an agreement to omit commission clauses until the meeting of your Eastern and Western Branches on March 6th?" They were told that was a joke. The report of this once more set the Society on fire, and once more something must be done. Like a giant cauldron of simmering clay, or coalesced clayey en-



The Vaudeville Bryan and "Cookie."

XIX.

AMONG them at this time was an unknown quantity. It was in the person of a certain Brother and friend of man, named J. C. Nugent. Jack Nugent, "Our Jack," they affectionately called him for many days after his advent. A great surprise was this same Nugent on that day when he unleashed himself for the first time and turned on his verbal fireworks. A young Lochinvar come out of the West. In a revolutionary age, he would have been a Patrick Henry, or a very Danton. Let Robespierre look to his laurels, for here is a man who will even disdain the smile of the goose goddess fame, in order to speak truth and warn all possible traitors who might unhappily fail them in the coming hour of trial. Unknown in the profession, and to most of the members assembled there, unknown, he told them what would happen (and what afterwards did happen), and what they must be prepared to do, and yet, what they never did do. An apple-faced boy, with dark hair and sleepy eyes, capable,

this, he had to endure it, for, as he himself said, "What can one guy do against six hundred?" However, he was there on the day of the Nugent oration, and had tried several times to get his word in, always being promptly called to order by the Chair. When Nugent began to speak this day, Cookie was one of his most attentive listeners, and everybody was attentive. The speaker was listened to in absolute silence. His words came slow at first, and calm; his voice was resonant, yet sleepy, until he warmed to his subject and poured forth the lava. Oh! ye laughing gods who preside over the destinies of earth's merry men, here is a wonder come to town! A man in a talky profession who can really talk, and who has something to say! The orator worked up to his peroration gradually. He told them what frail creatures men sometimes were, morally, in hours of moral trial. The Big Chief had said that we have only each other's words to depend on in the coming crisis. How many of them were going to be as good as their words? Did they all deeply understand that a man's word of honor is more binding to a real man than any oath or obligation? Until now, no man's word had been questioned. We accepted each other on simple faith. "Well, Brothers," said he, "that is all right, and was all right while we were sailing on calm seas, but a storm is approaching. We must be true to each other during this storm, and no word has ever been

spoken here to provide for what we shall do to him or those who may fail us in the darkling hours. I come to speak that word. I have come to warn the traitor!" Here the orator's voice began to thunder forth his rhetoric. His eyes flashed fire, his body swayed, he waved his arms, emotion seemed to be in every fibre of him!

"I have come to warn the possible traitors! Your profession is more dear to most of you that your lives! Such is your obsession! Every laugh is a heart throb—every word of applause is a thrill to most of you! Such is your obsession! You say this profession so dear to you is menaced by monopoly, and that the only way to win is to own it yourselves! You are going to buy it with the five per cent. commissions on your salaries! You are going to fight it out on these lines! Such is the issue! Well, if there is no other way, if we must fight, let's fight! But remember this: we are fighting money! That is the weapon of the opposition! Our only weapon is pure loyalty to each other, and therefore I wish to provide for the slave who may fail to be loyal in this coming hour of trial!"

Now the words came swifter, terrific! The hands waved more frantically!

"I wish to provide for him who shall fail us, and so I propose, here, now, standing on my own two feet, before you several hundred renowned and celebrated gentlemen, I propose (and I want my propo-

sition carried unanimously), that the first member of this Order who fails us during this coming storm, shall be ostracized from our profession! That no man who is now a White Rat will ever again shake his hand in the spirit of Brotherly Love! That no White Rat shall ever play on the same programme again with him! That he shall be stamped by all who know him as a BLACK RAT, and go down into desuetude and oblivion as a traitor to his fellows, unloved, unhonored and unsung!"

In some such way as this did he finish his peroration, and the effect on the members was tremendous. They cheered and applauded for several minutes. The band played. They sang the emblem, and then they cheered some more. It took several minutes to quiet them. The President pounded for order till he splintered his gavel; then he thumped a big brass gong with a bass drumstick. And, when order had finally been restored, and there was perfect silence in the Hall, it was then that the incorrigible Cookie arose and said, "That's what I've been trying to tell you guys for the last six months." The scream of laughter that followed this remark almost equalled the cheering just ended. However, the Nugent proposition was carried unanimously, as he wished it to be, and the Vaudeville Bryan had made his debut in the Fraternity of Follyland.

And yet, notwithstanding the punishment suggested for wrongdoers in his oration, this same Nu-

gent (as was afterwards proven) would be one of the first to deal leniently with erring ones, and prompt to show mercy to the frail. But he wanted to drill into their hearts the importance of their pledges, and convince everybody that, as to that phase of their affairs, there was to be no fooling. From that day Nugent became an important factor during the crisis, and a hard worker all through the reconstruction.

Victory.

XX.

THE meetings grew warmer, and still warm. There were Star Cabinet s meetings of the Board of Directc Electors, and daily meetings of the whole Or the 21st of February the Dromio was in cons most of the day with his lawyers. That ev score of members were on their different way the principal cities east of Chicago. And on lowing day—Lincoln's Birthday (Oh! most priate hour to strike for freedom!), Febra 1901, there were no White Rats appearing on the programmes given in any of the principal ville Theatres in the East or Middle West. theatres that did not close their doors ran wi graphs working over time, and such non-rat star) and amateur talent as could be secured. Montgomery arrived in Boston that mornin before eleven o'clock he had all the Vaudevil formers in the cultured city corralled in on suite of rooms, giving them instructions.

Monroe was acting likewise in Philadelphia, Jack Nugent in Buffalo, and other members in all the cities concerned. And now Paul Armstrong's work began to tell. The Associated Press of America had leading articles in all the principal papers daily, stating the cause of the crisis, and placing the issue fairly before the public. The Dromio was interviewed night and day by press representatives. The managers published what they thought to be their side, and also the amount of salaries paid to leading stars, hoping to convince the public that they were overpaid. They had no argument, because it was apparent to everyone that ninety-five cents was not one dollar. So they continued to threaten and fume, and the Biograph continued to work overtime. That they were surprised at the loyalty of the Fraternity states it but mildly. They were astounded. Their most frequent remark had been, "They cannot stick together." They said: "They have never been known to be true to each other!" And though this opinion was based on statistics—Well, this time it was different. Very few slipped or fell. In the Society the enthusiasm and excitement were so great that whole companies, engaged at other houses outside of the Syndicate, and not concerned in the fight, walked out, leaving the theatres dark, and came to the Lodge rooms, mostly in their make-ups. However, they were marched right back again. Now, the meetings of the Fraternity have become contin-

uous. Also there is continuous shouting and cheering, as the companies return from the different cities, where they have left their engagements. When there is not speech-making, the band is playing and members are throwing their hats in the air, waving flags and coats. It is the volcano burst open after so much smoldering. And everybody is true, all except a very few. In sane moments that occasionally intervene, business is attended to. Theatres are secured in different cities, companies are formed and sent on the road, benefits are given to packed houses that go wild with enthusisasm. The Dromio is everywhere making speeches and haranguing mobs. Thousands of letters and telegrams pour in from all over the country and Europe, praising the good work. Committees are formed to alleviate distress —relief committees, financial committees, amusement committees, all sorts of committees. The papers continue to publish articles and print photographs of the leading members and committees. Public sentiment is all with the Merry Makers. The people know that they are fighting for freedom—for a just principle—for a right to have a voice in their own affairs. This they know, but they don't know all. They don't know how much it means in the way of better entertainment. They don't know what it will mean to all future generations of stage people, and neither do they know that every battle

fought and won by any class against the power of gold is a victory for all the people at the same time.

And so the exciting days fly by. The Western Managers, seeing the trend of affairs, become alarmed. They have members who are playing for them send wires stating their friendliness to the Order, and inferences that they never did believe in commissions anyway. A committee is sent to Chicago to secure an agreement with the Western Branch, to the effect that they will book all future engagements through the White Rat offices. This committee of one returns with the agreement. He is wrapped in the American Flag, and carried the length of the Hall, while the band plays and the members cheer.

Daily the excitement increases. Restrictions as to equality of membership are done away with. The bars are let down, so to speak, and everybody becomes eligible, for the reason that if they were not in the Society, they were its natural enemies, and would be used by the managers in trying to keep the theatres open. And so the hoi-polloi comes stampeding into the fold. They are initiated in scores and fifties every day. Some of them have not had engagements for months, and some not for years. Persistent to remain in a sphere that their merits bear no warrant of, most of them are in want, and providing for their many needs soon proves a serious drain on the relief fund. In the regular

all, and who went about in want, yet asked for nothing; and others, with less ability, and much less reputation, with jewels plastered all over them, who tried to squeeze money from the Relief Committee. Surely they are a heterogeneous tribe.

For purposes of facility, the Relief Committee paid certain bills for those who ran in debt for daily wants, and all sorts of bills came in: Bills from the baker, the grocer and shoemaker; $150 butcher bills, and yet the crisis lasted only two weeks. Some people must have large families. One member even borrowed $500 to pay alimony—and never paid it back. Still the band plays, and the cheering goes on. Finally, that much talked of and looked for day, March the Sixth, dawns, and the Western Managers do *not* come to confer with their Eastern Brethren, for obvious reasons. It is reported that Mr. B. F. Keith will confer with the Dromio at his (Mr. Keith's) hotel, the Holland House. Dromio and a committee of two wait on him that evening. Mr. Keith is quiet, good natured, but reserved. He says he never was in favor of commissions. He has done all in his power to have them abolished, and as the Western Managers did not come East to confer, he and hisconfrères will tell the representatives of the press as much on the morrow. They will tell them that the Eastern Branch will abolish commissions. To the Dromio this

spells victory. If the members of the Managers' Association will tell the New York press that commissions have been abolished, this is as good as an agreement, because they could break any agreement with as much impunity as they could break their word. Whether they keep their word or not is a matter for individual performers to attend to in signing with them. The Committee returns with this good news to the Star Cabinet, which is in session and waiting, and there is much rejoicing. Mr. Keith kept his word, and the next day the New York press was teeming with accounts of the White Rats' Victory, distinctly stating that the managers had promised to abolish the commissions. *The Evening Journal* had one page, with just three words on it: *"WHITE RATS WIN."*

Jubiliation, Struggle and Strife.

XXI.

NOW the jubilation knows no bounds. The victory is celebrated with wine and song all over the United States. At a packed meeting on the following day the Dromio, whose physical strength was fast leaving him, summed up the situation in the following words:

"We have won the battle. Victory is ours! But whether it is virtual, or merely nominal, remains with yourselves, as individuals. So you understand? It remains with yourselves to keep what you have won, as individuals. The Society has won your battle for you. The Society will do all within its power to help you keep what it has won for you; but it can do nothing if you *secretly give back as individuals that which you have strived so hard to win collectively.* You understand how it is; we have won these commisisons, and that means that you are privileged to insist upon a neutral contract with each manager as an individual, and not book through the offices of his association. You have won as a

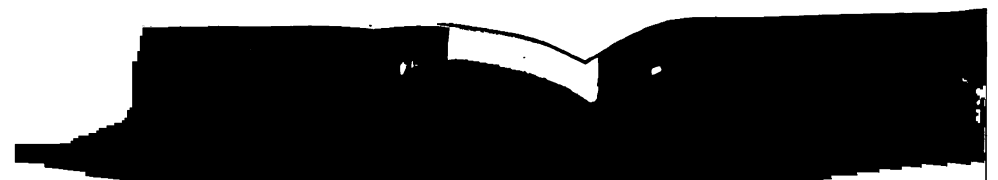
society, but you have *not* won as individuals, if you place your brothers at a disadvantage by *secretly* giving back that which they have helped you to win. Now, it is all up to you. A Society cannot put a new heart in a man, though it may give protection to the faint-hearted. In a few weeks there will be no association of managers, if you insist as individuals on keeping what you have won collectively. You all know, or should know, that you have joined your hearts together for far greater things than this five per cent. It is all stated in your Ritual, when you are given the light of Starland. You have come together to better your lives and all your conditions. Therefore, you must perpetuate your Fraternity. This five per cent. is merely an issue that you have won. It will mean much, if you use it collectively to purchase interests in those enterprises which are rightfully yours, and nothing if you keep it as individuals, or give it back in secret. You have been good, strong and true; you have won the first battle in theatrical history; now, let us try and keep what we have struggled so hard for, and some day we will own our own world, and be respected and held in esteem by all our fellows of earth."

There was much cheering, and more adulation for the Fool. They offer him a salary of $10,000 a year. He refuses to accept any remuneration. And now a new struggle begins. It is that of trying to keep the Society intact, and hold what it has won.

The booking department moves into new, large, luxurious offices on Broadway, with a dozen desks and as many booking agents. Each has his special department. There are agents who book sketches, and agents who book single turns, concert agents, agents for the women, and committees in control of the companies playing out of town at the leased theatres. These companies were formed to keep such members working as were not immediately in demand by the Association, and in order to make financial ends meet, they were supposed to accept half salaries in cash and half in notes on the Society. Some proclaimed their salaries honestly, and some doubled them, so that the half-cash they received amounted to the full regulation salary, and the notes were surplus. However, most all of them donated their notes to the Society afterwards, when it became in financial straits.

In a few weeks, the echoing rumblings of the war have ceased, and things have quieted down on the outside; but on the inside of the Society there are certain murmurings. Pickets and ferrets are kept on the lookout at certain offices for possible funkers, who may not be disposed to show their contracts when signed. But, ah! there are phones, long distance and otherwise, over which secret agreements may be made, that no ferret may keep tab on. But if there are murmurings among the merry men, things are worse among the managers. They are at

loggerheads. Mr. B. F. Proctor leaves them. So does Percy Williams. Tony Pastor left early in the game. Mike Shea is going to leave, and eventually does leave. Hyde and Behman are on the fence. Independent Vaudeville is being given in New York, Boston, Buffalo, Philadelphia, Detroit, Cleveland and Toledo, also on the Poli circuit. Poor old Poli! The Western Branch is angry at the Eastern Branch, and is writing sweet, honeyed nothings to the Dromio, offering him engagements, etc., and altogether there is great tribulation and unrest in the managerial camp. But the long strain is beginning to tell on the Fool. It is noticed that he is far from well, so they send him West, to recuperate his strength. Jim the Gipsy goes with him. Robert Dailey accompanies them as far as Chicago. A meeting is called in that Western city. Eligible candidates are made members, and booking offices are established there also. Two members are left in charge of the Chicago offices, with Robert Gaylor as advisory. The Dromio rests for two weeks at a health resort. When he returns to New York, a testimonial for him is under way. It was one of the biggest benefits ever given in New York. It was held at Koster & Bial's Music Hall, 34th Street. All the stars in New York took part in the performance, at the conclusion of which they presented the Fool with a Loving Cup containing several thousand dollars in gold. Nearly a hundred stars were crowded



on the stage. Tony Pastor introduced D
Hopper, who made the speech of presentatio

And now the weeks go by, and though ev
fort is made by the loyal members for the pre
of any internal strife, still it is felt b
same loyal ones that all is not so well in tl
ternity. The battle is over, and there are ma
pretend to think that that was all the Society
ganized for. Occasionally a resignation co
and soon after the resigning member's name
billed at the theatres controlled by the Asso
Many members are out of work, and have n
for future engagements. There are under
murmurings of discontent. Some of the In
ent houses go out of business. The funds
Society are exhausted. It is in debt, deeply i
and every plan, scheme, arrangement or me
resorted to to reimburse its coffers, pay off it
and keep idle and discontented members pl
Different boards meet regularly. The Societ
every Sunday, as usual. Many sacrifices c
to be made. There is argument, argument
ment, and though the echo of the old enthusi
mains, and indeed will always remain witl
who meant it, still the first battle is over; m
ergy has been spent, and the band doesn't pl
more. Resignations continue to come in, a
Fool goes almost crazy. Truly, his dream

solving. Well, the pendulum must swing both ways. At all events he will stick to the ship. Many members who were now working for the Association did not trouble to show their contracts, or pay any commission to their own booking offices, so the Board of Directors drew up the following contract, and all members that could be reached signed it:

"We, the undersigned members of the theatrical profession, do hereby employ the White Rats Vaudeville Agency as our sole and exclusive booking agent for the term of two years from the date of this contract, agreeing not to accept or play any Vaudeville engagement not booked through said agency; and we severally agree to pay said agent for services rendered in booking us during said time five per cent. of the gross amount severally received by us from all Vaudeville engagements during said time of two years, payable as received by us, whether said Vaudeville engagement is obtained through said agency or not.

"The White Rats Vaudeville Agency agree with each of the undersigned severally to maintain a booking office in the City of New York, and to exert its best efforts to obtain Vaudeville engagements for each of the undersigned.

"In witness whereof we have hereunto set our several hands and seals, the seal of one being the seal of all."

Hundreds of members signed the above contract,

but only a few paid in for a short time. The idea was finally abandoned altogether. In the meantime, the Vaudeville Agents, those who had been deprived of their clients by the merry war, had formed an Association of their own to decide on some way to get back into the game. It was proposed in the White Rats that they offer certain of these agents desk room in the Fraternity's Booking Offices, and give them two and one-half per cent. on all business transacted by them severally, as it was thought that they would be more capable of handling this phase of the situation than inexperienced members of the Society, who now had these matters in charge. The Board of Directors is deadlocked on this question for over a week. Some don't want the agents at any price. Some think the agents necessary on the outside, and others want them in their offices under their control, where they can watch them. It is finally decided to offer them desk room, but when the offer is made it is refused, and eventually W. W. Freeman is brought on, from the Western Branch of the Managers' Association to take charge of the White Rats' Booking Offices, in conjunction with Milton Aborn and Mart M. Fuller.

The months go by, and many more members resign. Others remain absent from the meetings through lack of interest, or perhaps fatigue. The Carnival is forgotten; very little money is coming in in dues; there are no more initiations. The loyal

members exert their utmost endeavors to keep the Order intact. They attend all the meetings, contribute their money, acting on committees, planning, thinking, working, hoping eventually to pay off the debts of the Order. Ezra Kendall is much in evidence. His arguments have great weight with all members. Every meeting he takes his place at one end of the Hall opposite to the Dromio, and back and forth they argue matters out. Night and day the Fool is begging members to be loyal, pleading with others to pay up their dues, and urging others to join. Everywhere people ask him if the Society is still in existence. He is growing weak and thin, and the members are looking much towards Kendall. Again the Dromio meets Mantwa, who says to him: "What, are you still alive? I heard you had gone mad." The Dromio looked at him and smiled. Mantwa continued: "Well, you've had your fling, and a pretty mess you have made of it, to be sure. I hear you refused ten thousand dollars a year?" "Yes," said the Dromio; "I accepted a benefit instead." "Well, I suppose that appealed to you," laughed Mantwa. "It was more showy." "It was a demonstration of their loyalty," said the Fool.

"Well, I'll give you credit for one thing," said Mantwa, "nobody but a fool could have built his house on the quicksand wherein you dug, and struck any foundation whatever. Your whole basis is discontent. *Discontent* of what? Of conditions af-

fecting your fellows, you will say; but when they are worthy of better conditions, they will have them. If you wish to be a real martyr, why do you not go and work for those who are really in need, those in the slums, tenements and sweatshops? You will be as easily torn to pieces for your pains. Why don't you liberate those little children who work in the cotton mills of the South? These gay and airy people of yours are the freest people on earth, and the most overpaid. Why don't you go into politics and be a reformer? You are like a fakir standing on a street corner in front of a glass tank full of showy fish of different colors, and saying to the crowds: 'Behold! these things on these fish that look to you, people, like fins, are really wings! Wait, and you will see them all fly! They are angels, disguised as fish! If you wait they will fly for you! But it is apparent to all that they never fly. They are just fish, Dromio; that's all, just fish, and your naming them angels will never change them. Why do you continue to praise them? Do you know the ridiculous part you are playing?"

"I know I am playing some kind of a part," said the Fool.

"Do you appreciate the humor of Don Quixote fighting the Windmill?" said Mantwa.

"Yes," said the Fool. "And I know I seem something like that, and I like it. It is the part I am cast to play. It is picturesque. The part suits me. 'I

can see myself in it,' as the actors say. I am bizarre, grotesque. But in me, in all of us, as in 'Hamlet,' there is more than seems, good Mantwa. Do you understand what I mean?"

"No," said Mantwa, "not unless you mean that you are content to be a living laughing stock for all the world."

"That is just what I must be," said Dromio, "deplore it as I may, and as for their shortcomings, I see in them only that which belongs to me—their goodness."

"Well," said Mantwa, "a few months ago you were being called 'The man without a price.' In a few months hence you will be known as a man without *the* price. I suppose you know that already you are the butt of every jest in the Tenderloin? Your name has only to be mentioned to raise a laugh. You are the human joke of gay New York."

"No, I did not know it," said the Dromio, "but I don't much care. I laugh sometimes at myself, when my heart is breaking."

"But you fitted yourself for something different," said Mantwa. "You had a great chance, and while you have been fighting for this cause (Oh, God, that word nearly chokes me!)—while you have been blowing your bubbles into oblivion, several of your Rats, as you call them, have made their hits and are on their way to fame."

"Well, what is the use of going all over it again?"

said the Fool. "I heard a song, that's all. I just heard a song, and I listened. You will never hear it. You don't know what it means. I will listen to the end. That's all. Good day."

And again the Fool sought out Gipsy Jim for consolation.

"Oh! that Mantwa!" said he to Gipsy Jim. "He is perfect Hell to me! If I had to meet him twice a week, I'd go mad!"

"What does he say?" said Jim.

"Oh! he says everything! He has all the arguments of the other side at his fingertips. Nothing is worthy with him if it doesn't carry with it present proof of its availability."

"Well, forget him," said Jim. "We'll stick to our guns and beat them yet. Have another drink. Some day they will found cities after the fashion of our Order."

After some more talk, Jim left him in a reverie over his cigar. He sat for an hour, with his eyes half closed, thinking.

"Oh, God! he said to himself, "what prodigious vanity there is in all of us—and especially in me. How self-centered I am. Why cannot a man do his work, and never see himself, even in visions? What is fame but the mouthing of your name by a rabble who take their cue from a few credulous ones who have made a guess about you? What man ever knew another's soul? In proportion to the light

given you, you must hide yourself. Francis Bacon must have had a sixth sense. Mantwa! I must either kill him or die myself!"

Thus musing, he fell asleep at the table. He was awakened by a crowd of members standing around him singing the emblem of the Order.

"Asleep at the switch!" they cried. Drinks were ordered, and there was much talking, bantering, kidding, and alcoholic philosophy indulged in, which wound up in a night of Bachanalian revelry, as is the wont of all frequenters of the Tenderloin, whether they be there for life, or death, or dreams.

A Glance at Barrymore.

XXII.

THE late Maurice Barrymore had been all through the battle. He was a man noted for his prowess in many ways, besides being a splendid actor and a playwright. He wrote "Najesda," from which it is said "La Tosca" was taken, and many will remember the controversy appertaining thereto which appeared in the London and Parisian press some years ago between M. Sardou and himself, and out of which he came with colors flying, as indeed he did in all controversies, as he was especially at home in the use of satire and burning invective. He hated all forms of cant and sophistry, and woe betide any ill-advised pretender who dared to enter the lists with him! His wit was brilliant, scintilating, pungent, but in his heart he was a poet. However, he was on the wane at this time, and his admiration for the Fool was great. A specimen of spontaneous word painting is recalled. One day he came into a Board Meeting and, as the Fool passed out of the

He is a Fool. I once came through a glacial region where men were made of stone and hearts were made of ice, and those men were all congealed together, till they formed one huge mountain that reached to the sky. There was no way around at either end, and in front of this mountain of rock and ice stood a fool glaring at it. Back of him stood his army of Mountebanks. I said to him: 'Whither goest, Fool?' and he answered, 'Through the mountain.' I ran away, shouting, 'Fool! Fool! Fool!' My laugh reverberated all through the valleys of the glacial region. Anon, I returned, and there stood the Fool. His penknife was splintered, his hands were bleeding, but, by all the gods, the mountain was gone! and the Fool and his Army went marching on!"

Reconstruction

XXIII.

YES, true enough, his Army was marching on! However, they were not marching very fast a few months later. In fact, the movement was almost stagnated. Still the members continued to meet regularly, and pay off debts, and reconstruct the Order.

Another year goes by in this way, and again the Dromio is elected President unanimously. Ezra Kendall is made Vice President, and Mardo the Stoical, Secretary.

Then follows nearly another year of hard struggling against apathy and indifference. The Fool is discredited everywhere, except among his own true Knights. There are now barely seventy-five of them left. Still, they are the best in the profession, and they have been tried. How they have been tried!

As Kendall afterwards said, they wintered at Valley Forge.

The Little Gold Lady begins to fear for the Dro-

an earnest of good faith, and as an investment for their own protection. You can call it the Investment Fund, or Star Legion, or whatever name you choose, and every member must pay into this fund a certain percentage of his earnings weekly, the same to be accredited to his own account; and he must forfeit same, or a large percentage of same. whenever he shall for any reason forsake the Fraternity. Then, if you wish to continue fooling yourself, you can still pretend that it is goodness of heart that keeps them loyal to you, but those who do weaken in the future will at least have to sacrifice something to those who have courage and faith in the outcome of your dream.

"We are living in a business age, my Dromio. All of us but you. You are either back with the Knight Errants of old, or in some future time, or in some raphsody that these men cannot comprehend, and you cannot blame them. In this age you must play with money. Dollars are the chips in the game, and nothing else counts. You have not even Fear as a weapon to wield, because you cannot shoot a traitor dead, as can a general in the army. You must strike at their hearts through their pockets, and while you advance them through their own possession, or fear of losing that which they already have, you will be rendering them as great a service as if your faith in them were wisely grounded."

"Oh! I tried that in the beginning," said the Dromio, "but they voted it down."

"Well, you must try again, and keep as members of your Order only those who will back up their words with their money."

"How about those who haven't money to spare?"

"Well, give them time to get some. You must stop dreaming just for a little while, Dromio. You must try them out, now, once and for all. You are weak and ill. You have aged twenty years in the last two. Make them put up their money, and then if they all fail you but ten, or your original eight, for that matter, what you will have left will be *quality,* and with quality you can build again. Numbers prove nothing. Look you, a dozen men rule the destinies of your nation of eighty millions. With other nations it is the same. What do they rule with? Money! Why do the dozen stick together? Money! Why are they stronger than Presidents or Kings? Money! Everybody knows this but you, and those of your remaining members who will not put up their money, do not belong to you. They have not the faith of the mustard seed. So long—I must be going—I have an appointment. Have courage, old chap. You have done your best, according to your lights. So long. I'll see you tomorrow," and Mantwa was gone.

The next day the Dromio called a meeting of his friends and, at his request, ten members placed one

hundred dollars apiece in an Investment Fund, and Ezra Kendall was made Secretary and Treasurer. And from that day the benefits to be derived from this Fund was preached at every meeting. All the possibilities of success or failure of theatrical investments by actors were analyzed weekly, and all arguments proved that the only sure and safe plan of reconstruction was through the medium of interesting all present and future members of the Society in this Fund or Legion, as it was sometimes called. Of course, there were those who continued to preach against it, and who indeed tried to thwart every move made for advancement of any kind. They continued to yell, "What will the Managers say?" as if they themselves were made mere chattels, or were owned body and soul by other men. Meanwhile, Kendall sent the members weekly statements of their financial standing in the Legion, and the Fund continued to grow. When twenty-seven members had joined, the following Prospectus was dictated by the Dromio, typewritten by Fred Niblo, and a printed copy sent to all members of the Fraternity:

Prospectus of the Star Legion.

XXIV.

Prospectus of The "Star Legion."

THE Star Legion is a Society of reputable players chosen from all branches of the theatrical profession on account of their ability, reputation and character, for the purpose of conducing to the welfare, advancement and independence of the player and playgoer, and by forming an Investment Fund among the players to be used in co-operation between player, patron, author and manager, to thus insure practicability. The members of the above Society believe that by co-operating with the public in certain investments they can best serve the interests of every phase of the theatrical profession by conducing to its advancement in every way, and at the same time secure for those who become financially interested better dividends than can be found elsewhere in any theatrical investment. The certainty of this will be easily seen by the citizens and

managers of each community with whom we wish to co-operate, when confidence is thoroughly established by the quality of our membership, by the steady growth of same, and especially when we have made paying enterprises of our first ventures.

And this we cannot but do, as will be seen by a careful study of this Investment Fund plan, full information regarding any point of which will be furnished anyone applying to the President or Secretary. The Star Legion is therefore co-operative, fraternal, and social. It is co-operative in its relation to its own members, who, by concentrating a portion of their collective earnings, and investing same in conjunction with the public and managers, for the purpose of insuring legitimate competition, and by being thus financially interested, of assuring said public and managers of support or co-operation. The players can, by saving and concentrating a very small portion of their collective weekly earnings, conduce in every way to their financial independence and their general advancement without in any way risking the enmity of discrimination of anyone. As by numbering among our first membership only reputable artists, whose services are in demand, and by not restricting any member as to whom he shall or shall not play for, or through whom he shall or shall not book his engagements, or in any way interfering with his individual liberty, we can play for, and remain on good terms with,

actors who manage and back their own companies. Members will only be expected to pay on such weeks as they play. Several of our members are now paying into the Fund ten per cent. of their earnings, and it is conjectured by the most conservative that for each member who pays in one per cent. there will be at least one who will pay in at least nine per cent. of his earnings, thus making an average of 5 per cent. per member even during the first year, until we have firmly established confidence in the practicability and stability of this plan. And five per cent. of the weekly earnings of the present members of this Fund will amount to many thousands of dollars per annum. There will be no watered stock. No member will have more than one vote. All books will be open to all members for inspection. The membership for the first year will be limited to one hundred and twenty-five. These first one hundred and twenty-five members will be accepted because they will possess all the requirements necessary for the furtherance of our aims. The average weekly salary of the present membership of this Fund is more than $250 per member, and each member's services are in constant demand by the public. Supposing the first membership of one hundred and twenty-five receive an average salary of $200 per week, and that each member plays forty weeks a year, and the income to the Fund averages five per cent. per member. This would amount to exactly

will be placed in savings banks in the name of the Society until invested; and, as before stated, all books will be open at all times for inspection by our members. Though stress has been laid on the money earning capacity of our present membership, it must be borne in mind that an applicant's eligibility will not depend on the amount of salary he receives, but on his character and standing as a gentleman and artist, and his ability to appreciate a progressive idea and honest endeavor.

This Legion is not confined to any particular phase of theatricals. It is open to the whole player profession. That there is nothing to sacrifice, and much to gain, in becoming a member is plain. Its many advantages and infinite possibilities will appear clear, however, to those who think, and who have the welfare of the Profession at heart.

THE DROMIO, President.

EZRA KENDALL, Secretary and Treasurer.

Directors: David C. Montgomery, John L. Rixford, Mark P. Murphy, Junie McCree, Fred Stone, Horace Goldin, James F. Dolan, Frank Gardiner, Chas. T. Aldrich, George B. Reno, George Felix, Ren Shields, George W. Monroe, Sam Morton, Walter Leroy, M. J. Sullivan, Nat. M. Wills, Chas. McDonald, Harry Hayes, Joe Birnes, Harry Luken, Eddie Foy, Bobby Gaylor, George Evans, Todd Judge and Fred Niblo.

were too easy. If at the beginning you had pursued this plan, when they were all hot and eagerly clamoring for admission, your Society would now be immensely wealthy. No one would have forsaken you. When interests are mutual, he who forsakes the general body also forsakes himself; not only sentimentally, as before, but financially, by way of forfeit. And they who remain will thus profit financially in proportion to the disaffection. Please keep in mind that we live in an age of gold. You can only fight money with money. Your attempt to do otherwise has proven it. Meanwhile, you must go away somewhere and forget, or you will die. Think of your wife and little ones, and get away for awhile, at least. You are ill, and everyone knows you are living principally on stimulants. Your heart is broken, but it will mend. Get away, Dromio; accept that engagement in England, and get away. Kendall will keep these fellows together. They are all your friends, anyway. They are the sifted wheat from all the chaff. They will be true to you forever. If it were only your life, I would hold my tongue, but think of The Little Gold Lady, who has been so true to you, and of the little ones. Think of them. You are sacrificing them all now unnecessarily. You have listened to me once. Heed me just once more, and get away."

"Very well," said the Dromio, "I will go to England."

in the same spirit as of old, and as if the Society were still a flourishing success—and so it was in quality. Every week the Fraternity continued to hold meetings and listen to arguments, mostly about the advantages of the Fund.

In the meantime a great change had come over the Dromio. He was tired in soul and body. He accepted an engagement at the Palace Theatre, in London, and after leaving all the affairs of the Order in Kendall's hands, he and The Little Gold Lady and weeuns sailed away on the good ship Cedric for England. There were many friends at the wharf to see the Fool and his family away, among them was Gipsy Jim. He took Dromio aside, and said: "Answer me one question before you go." "Did I ever refuse to?" said the Foolish One. "Well, then, who is Mantwa?" "Did you ever hear of Socrates and his Daemon?" "*No.*" "Did you ever read Poe's 'William Wilson?'" "No." "Did you ever read Balzac's 'Magic Skin?'" "No." "Well, 'Dr. Jekyl and Mr. Hyde,' then?" "Yes, I've read that, but what has it to do with Mantwa?"

"Listen, Jim," said Dromio. "Mantwa is the other side of my world. Everything is double, one against the other. Everything is twain, one within the other. In proportion to our dreams, there is a balance born, else we would go insane. 'Dr. Jehkyl and Mr. Hyde' are types of the good and bad in man. Dromio and Mantwa are types of dream and

He is the accumulated knowledge of all my worldly experience. He is Me. Shake hands with Mantwa, and say, Au Revoir!"

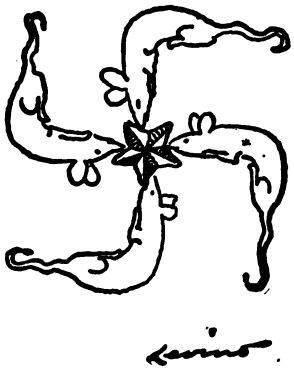
"Au Revoir," sighed Jim the Gipsy, as he shook his hand; "but to me you will always be the same old Dromio." "No, Jim; henceforth I will be Mantwa." "Well," said Jim, "you know that hundred that I put away for you about fifteen years ago?" "Yes?" "Well, it is still there, and I'll bet you that hundred against a new hat that when I next hear from you you'll be Dromio again. You will succeed in London, and when hope and strength return, you will go back to your dreams." "It's a bet. Goodbye." "Goodbye, Dromio." The Fool rushed up the gang plank, and Jim shouted from the wharf once more:

"So long, Dromio! You old dreamer!"

And the ship sailed away.

A month later the Fool was the rage of London. He played the record successful engagement at the Palace Theatre, and nightly entertained the great folk of Europe for many months following. His humor was on every man's lips; his stories told everywhere. People laughed, and said: "He is the lightest hearted jester alive." To him it was all the dance of death, the mockery of buried hopes and shattered ideals. His success in London was printed in the American papers, and, near the end of the summer, when Gipsy Jim read that his friend had

Mudge, who had been much in evidence since the early days, was elected President, and the Order thrived for two years more. Mudge resigned during his term of office, and George Monroe piloted the ship until the next election, when Fred Niblo was made the Presiding Chief of Ratland—which is Starland. Meanwhile, Harry Mountford, who in the meantime had federated all the Actors of "the Halls" of England and got into an argument for his pains, has come to America and reorganized the business department of the Order, putting into execution once again many ideas of the Dromio.



ment from the federation.

He impresses one as being fearless and true, Young, ardent, keen, shrewd, alert, and well educated. A man who has read much and thought more. He has a knowledge of law, a fine sense of humor, a high sense of duty and the proportion of things. Who, in preference to a selfish career, has decided to give himself to the cause of the betterment of his fellow man. His regard for justice has been shown by his flat refusal during a crisis to observe any difference or partiality in dealing with people of different occupations, whether of greater or lesser money earning capacity, whether of supposed higher or lower dignity, when the same promise of loyalty had been made to all. Sometimes while being allowed the privilege of great undertakings we are tested as to whether we are *men*. Whether while working in some certain sphere of effort our hopes are narrowed to its particular confines or whether we can be as broad as the world. Mountford, while working for the advancement of his stage fellows is really for men. If you say it was a just destiny that impelled him Westward after he had succeeded in helping to awake his fellows of England; if you say fate was only awarding him for duties well performed, and at the same time rewarding those loyal ones over here for so steadfastly following their light by sending them one

his head full of brains and his heart full of love, and George Delmore, Walter Le Roy, George Felix, Tim McMahon, James Harrigan, Edwin Keough, Colie Lorella, Will J. Cooke, Frank Herbert, Robert Dailey, William F. Carroll (Irish Billy), John P. Hill, Tim Cronin, the politician; William Courtleigh, Charles Stine, Frank Fogarty, Joe Calahan, Jack Gardiner, Bert Leslie, William Gould, Charles B. Lawlor, Ren Shields, Frank North, Harry Knowles, and Corse Payton.

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So bid them Godspeed, my Little Gold Lady, for surely they are marching on.

The pipers are playing their magic tunes;
They are singing the songs of Brotherly love.
The buglers are trumpeting, trumpeting,
The clarions are calling, calling.

Into their ranks from all earth's climes and from all walks of life, come the starry eyed children of smiles.

They are marching on to the land of good thoughts and good deeds, where actions are brave and where duties are well performed.

So wish them Godspeed, my Little Gold Lady, for the Fool in his heart heard the song of the Nightingale, and he said unto them, through the Spirit of Starland, "I have come to give you peace and light; I have come to make you free."

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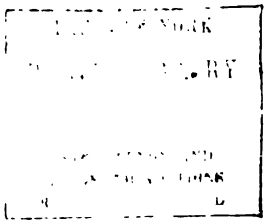

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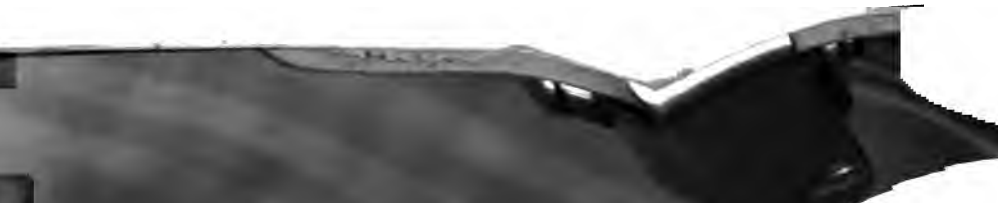

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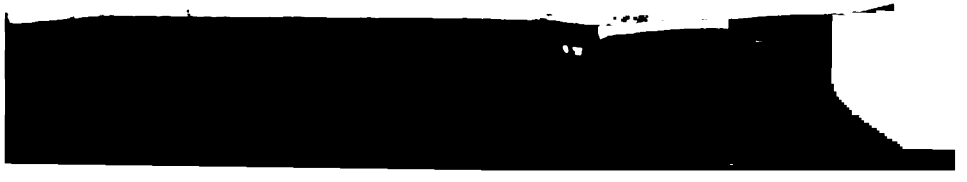

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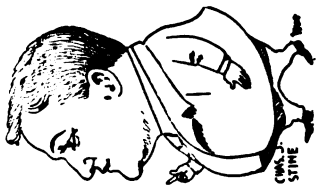

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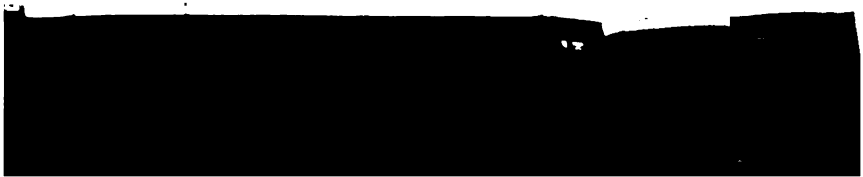

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